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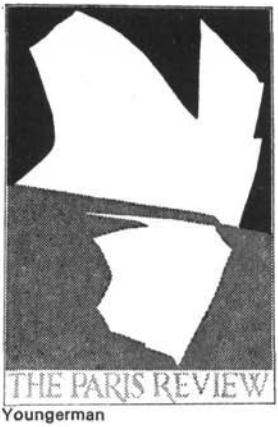

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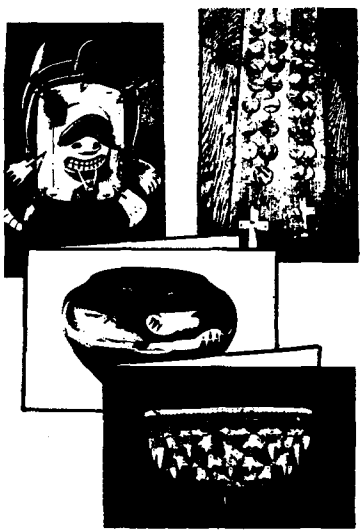

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3 **Alaskan Eskimo Mask**
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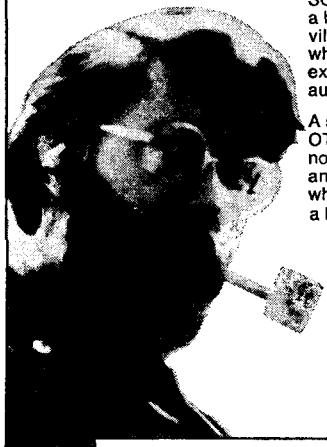

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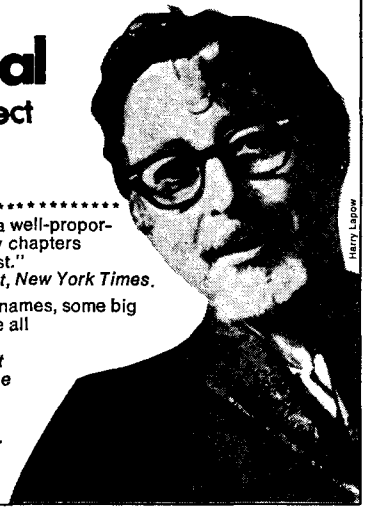

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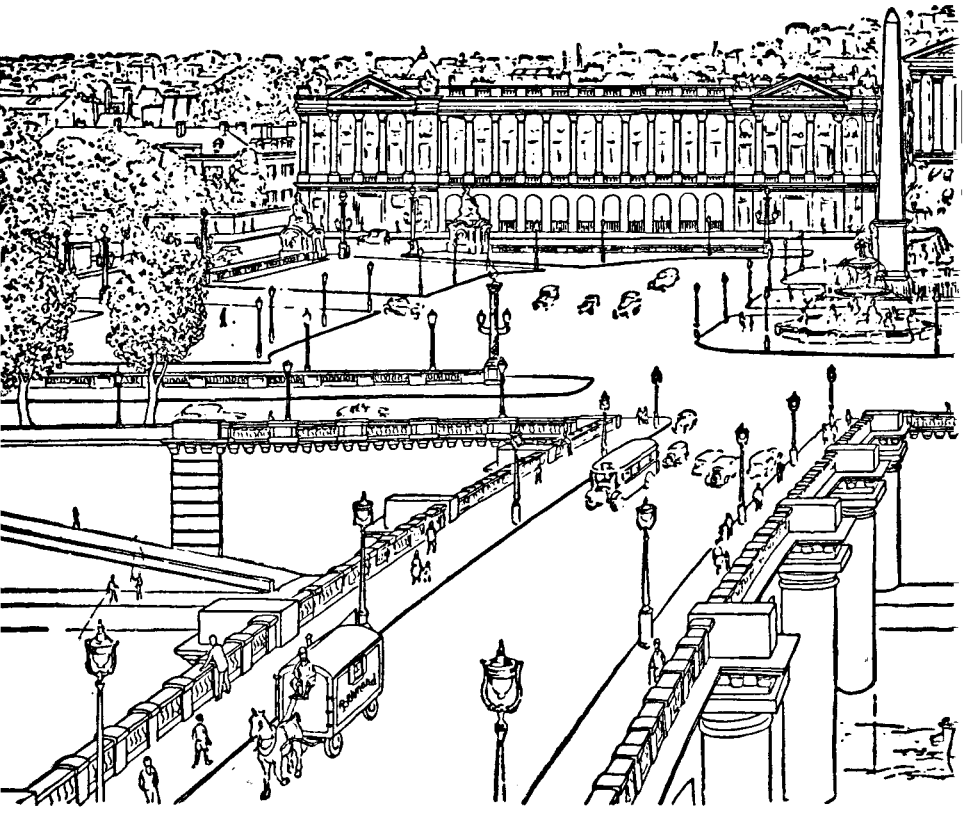

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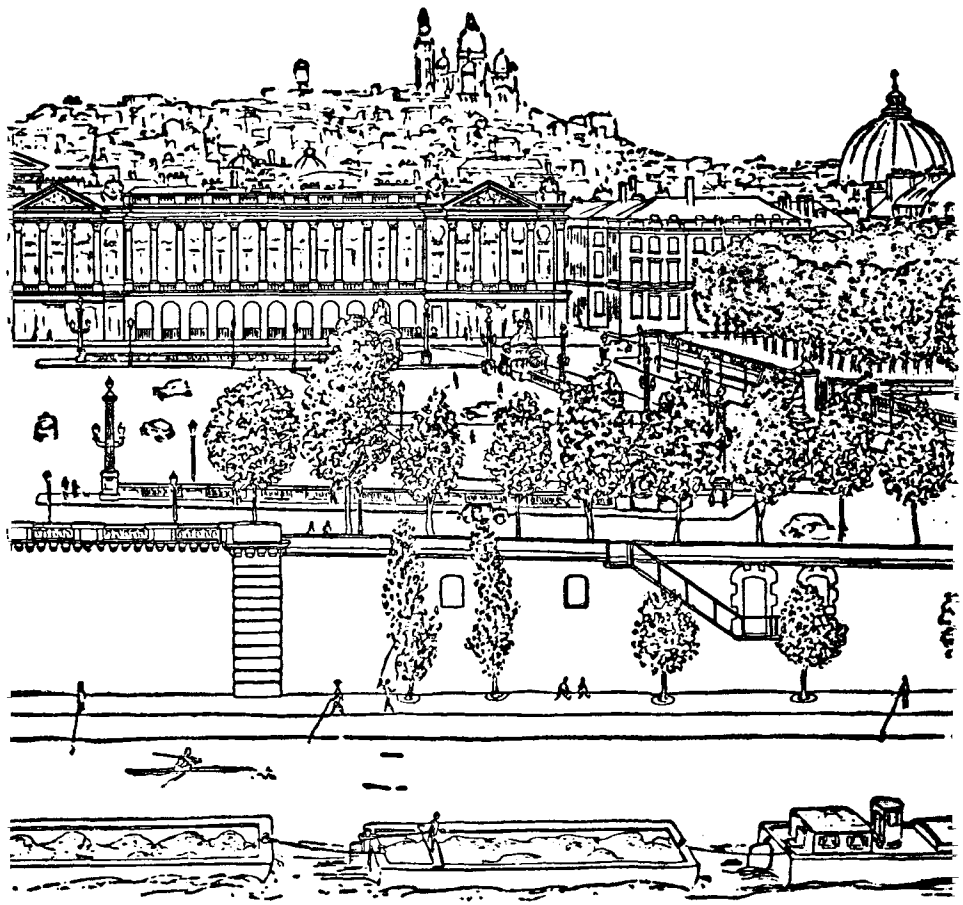

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Via Negativa

James Salter

There is a kind of minor writer who is found in a room of the library signing his novel. His index finger is the color of tea, his smile filled with bad teeth. He knows literature, however. His sad bones are made of it. He knows what was written and where writers died. His opinions are cold but accurate. They are pure, at least there is that.

He's unknown, though not without a few admirers. They are really like marriage, uninteresting, but what else is there? His life is his journals. In them somewhere is a line from the astrologer: your natural companions are women. Occasionally, perhaps. No more than that. His hair is thin. His clothes are a little out of style. He is aware, however, that there is a great, a final glory which falls on certain figures barely noticed in their time, touches them in obscurity and recreates their lives. His heroes are Musil and, of course, Gerard Manley Hopkins. Bunin.

There are writers like P in an expensive suit and fine, English shoes who come walking down the street in eye-splintering sunlight, the crowd seeming to part for them, to leave an opening like the eye of a storm.

"I hear you got a fortune for your book."

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"What? Don't believe it," they say, though everyone knows.

On close examination, the shoes are even handmade. Their owner has a rich head of hair. His face is powerful, his brow, his long nose. A suffering face, strong as a door. He recognizes his questioner as someone who has published several stories. He only has a moment to talk.

"Money doesn't mean anything," he says. "Look at me. I can't even get a decent haircut."

He's serious. He doesn't smile. When he came back from London and was asked to endorse a novel by a young acquaintance he said, let him do it the way I did, on his own. They all want something, he said.

And there are old writers who owe their eminence to the *New Yorker* and travel in wealthy circles like W, who was famous at twenty. Some critics now feel his work is shallow and too derivative—he had been a friend of the greatest writer of our time, a writer who inspired countless imitators, perhaps it would be better to say one of the great writers, not everyone is in agreement, and I don't want to get into arguments. They broke up later anyway, W didn't like to say why.

His first, much-published story—everyone knows it—brought him at least fifty women over the years, he used to say. His wife was aware of it. In the end he broke with her, too. He was not a man who kept his looks. Small veins began to appear in his cheeks. His eyes became red. He insulted people, even waiters in restaurants. Still, in his youth he was said to have been very generous, very brave. He was against injustice. He gave money to the Loyalists in Spain.

Morning. The dentists are laying out their picks. In the doorways, as the sun hits them, the bums begin to groan. Nile went on the bus to visit his mother, the words of Victor Hugo about *all the armies in the world being unable to stop an idea whose time has come* on an advertisement above his head. His hair was uncombed. His face had the arrogance, the bruised lips of someone determined to live without money.

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His mother met him at the door and took this pale face in her hands. She stepped back to see better. She was trembling slightly with a steady, rhythmic movement.

"Your teeth," she said.

He covered them with his tongue. His aunt came from the kitchen to embrace him.

"Where have you been?" she cried. "Guess what we're having for lunch."

Like many fat women, she liked to laugh. She was twice a widow, but one drink was enough to make her dance. She went to set the table. Passing the window, she glanced out. There was a movie house across the street.

"Degenerates," she said.

Nile sat between them, pulling his chair close to the table with little scrapes. They had not bothered to dress. The warmth of family lunches when the only interest is food. He was always hungry when he came. He ate a slice of bread heavy with butter as he talked. There was scrod and sauteed onions on a huge dish. Voices everywhere—the television was going, the radio in the kitchen. His mouth was full as he answered their questions.

"It's a little flat," his mother announced. "Did you cook it the same way?"

"Exactly the same," his aunt said. She tasted it herself. "It may need salt."

"You don't put salt on seafood," his mother said.

Nile kept eating. The fish fell apart beneath his fork, moist and white, he could taste the faint iodine of the sea. He knew the very market where it had been displayed on ice, the Jewish owner who did not shave. His aunt was watching him.

"Do you know something?" she said.

"What?"

She was not speaking to him. She had made a discovery.

"For a minute then, while he was eating, he looked just like his father."

A sudden, sweet pause opened in the room, a depth that had not been there when they were talking only of immorality and the danger of the blacks. His mother looked at him reverently.

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"Did you hear that?" she asked. Her voice was hushed, she longed for the myths of the past. Her eyes had darkness around them, her flesh was old.

"How do you look like him?" She wanted to hear it recited.

"I don't," he said.

They did not hear him. They were arguing about his childhood, various details of it, poems he had memorized, his beautiful hair. What a good student he had been. How grown-up when he ate, the fork too large for his hand. His chin was like his father's, they said. The shape of his head.

"In the back," his aunt said.

"A beautiful head," his mother confirmed. "You have a perfect head, did you know that?"

Afterwards he lay on the couch and listened as they cleared the dishes. He closed his eyes. Everything was familiar to him, phrases he had heard before, quarrels about the past, even the smell of the cushions beneath his head. In the bedroom was a collection of photographs in ill-fitting frames. In them, if one traced the progression, was a face growing older and older, more and more unpromising. Had he really written all those earnest letters preserved in shoe boxes together with school books and folded programs? He was sleeping in the museum of his life.

He left at four. The doorman was reading the newspaper, his collar unbuttoned, the air surrounding him rich with odors of cooking. He didn't bother to look up as Nile went out. He was absorbed in a description of two young women whose bound bodies had been found on the bank of a canal. There were no pictures, only those from a high-school yearbook. It was June. The street was lined with cars, the gutters melting.

The shops were closed. In their windows, abandoned to afternoon, were displays of books, cosmetics, leather clothes. He lingered before them. A great longing for money, a thirst rose in him, a desire to be recognized. He was walking for the hundredth time on streets which in no way acknowledged him, past endless apartments, consulates—in one of them worked the French girl who had been the model for Anne-

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Marie Costallat—banks. He came to the fifties, behind the great hotels. The streets seemed dank, like servants' quarters. Paper lay everywhere, envelopes, empty packages of cigarettes.

In Jeanine's apartment it was better. The floor was polished. Her breath was sweet.

"Have you been out?" he asked her.

"No, not yet."

"The streets are melting," he said. "You weren't working, were you?"

"I was reading."

From her windows one could see the deep salon in the rear of the Plaza in which hairdressers worked. It was red, with mirrors that multiplied its secrets. Naked, on certain afternoons, they had watched its silent acts.

"What are you reading?" he asked.

"Gogol."

"Gogol..." He closed his eyes and began to recite, almost mechanically, "*In the carriage sat a gentleman, not handsome but not bad-looking, not too stout and not too thin, not old, but not so very young...*"

"What a memory you have."

"Listen, what novel is this? *For a long time I used to go to bed early...*"

"That's too easy," she said.

She was sitting on the couch, her legs drawn up beneath her, the book near her hand.

"I guess it is," he said. "Did you know this about Gogol? He died a virgin."

"Is that true?"

"The Russians are a little curious that way," he said. "Chekhov himself thought once a year was sufficient for a writer."

She smiled. He had told her that before, he realized.

"Not everyone agrees with that," he murmured. "You know who I saw on the street yesterday? Dressed like a banker. Even his shoes."

"Who?"

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Nile described him. After a moment she knew who he must be talking about.

"He's written a new book," she said.

"So I hear. I thought he was going to hold out his ring for me to kiss. I said, listen, tell me one thing, honestly: all the money, the attention..."

"You didn't."

Nile smiled. The teeth his mother wept over were revealed.

"He was terrified. He knew what I was going to say. He had everything, everybody was talking about him, and all I had was a pin. A needle. If I pushed, it would go straight to his heart."

She had a boy's face and arms with a faint trace of muscle. Her fingernails were bitten clean. The afternoon light which had somehow found its way into the room gleamed from her knees. She was from Montana. When they first met, Nile had seen her as complaisant, which excited him, even stupid, but he discovered it was only a vast distance, perhaps of childhood, which surrounded her. She revealed herself in simple, unexpected acts, like a farmboy undressing. As she sat on the couch, one arm was exposed beside her. Within its elbow he could see the long, rich artery curved down to her wrist. It was full. It lay without beating.

She had been married. Her past astonished him. Her body bore no mark of it, not even a memory, it seemed. All she had learned was how to live alone. In the bathroom were soaps with the name printed on them, soaps that had never been wet. There were fresh towels, flowers in a blue glass. The bed was flat and smooth. There were books, fruit, announcements stuck in the edge of the mirror.

"What did you ask him?" she said.

"Do you have any wine?" Nile said. While she was gone, he continued in a louder voice, "He's afraid of me. He's afraid of me because I've accomplished nothing."

He looked up. Plaster was flaking from the ceiling.

"You know what Cocteau said," he called. "There's a fame worse than failure. I asked him if he thought he really deserved it all."

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"And what did he say?"

"I don't remember. What's this?" He took the bottle of sea-colored glass she carried. The label was slightly stained. "A Pauillac. I don't remember this. Did I buy it?"

"No."

"I didn't think so." He smelled it. "Very good. Someone gave it to you," he suggested.

She filled his glass.

"Do you want to go to a film?" he asked.

"I don't think so."

He looked at the wine.

"No?" he said.

She was silent. After a moment she said,

"I can't."

He began to inspect titles in the bookcase near him, many he had never read.

"How's your mother?" he asked. "I like your mother." He opened one of the books. "Do you write to her?"

"Sometimes."

"You know, Viking is interested in me," he said abruptly. "They're interested in my stories. They want me to expand *Lovenights*."

"I've always liked that story," she said.

"I'm already working. I'm getting up very early. They want me to have a photograph made."

"Who did you see at Viking?"

"I forget his name. He's a... dark hair, he's about my size. I should know his name. Well, what's the difference?"

She went into the bedroom to change her clothes. He wanted to follow her.

"Don't," she said.

He sat down again. He could hear occasional, ordinary sounds, drawers opening and being shut, periods of silence. It was as if she were packing.

"Where are you going?" he called.

She was brushing her hair. He could hear the swift, rhythmic strokes. She was facing herself in the mirror, not even aware of him. He was like a letter lying on the table, the

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half-read Gogol, like the wine. When she emerged, he could not look at her. He sat slouched, like a passionate child.

"Jeanine," he said, "I know I've disappointed you. But it's true about Viking."

"Of course, it's true."

"I'll be very busy... Do you have to go just now?"

"I'm a bit late."

"No, you're not," he said. "Please."

She could not answer.

"Anyway, I have to go home and work," he said. "Where are you going?"

"I'll be back by eleven," she said. "Why don't you call me?"

She tried to touch his hair.

"There's more wine," she said. She no longer believed in him. In things he might say, yes, but not in him. She had lost her faith.

"Jeanine..."

"Goodbye, Nile," she said. It was the way she ended telephone calls.

She was going to the nineties, to dinner in an apartment she had not seen. Her arms were bare. Her face seemed very young.

When the door closed, panic seized him. He was suddenly desperate. His thoughts seemed to fly away, to scatter like birds. It was a deathlike hour. On television, the journalists were answering complex questions. The streets were still. He began to go through her things. First the closets. The drawers. He found her letters. He sat down to read them, letters from her brother, her lawyer, people he did not know. He began pulling forth everything, shirts, underclothes, long clinging weeds which were stockings.He kicked her shoes away, spilled open boxes. He broke her necklaces, pieces rained to the floor. The wildness, the release of a murderer filled him. As she sat smoking, sometimes with a smile, the men nearby uncertain, seeking to hold her glance, he whipped her like a yelping dog from room to room, pushing her into walls, tearing her clothes. She was stumbling, crying, he felt the

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horror of his acts. He had no right to them—why did this justify everything?

He was bathed in sweat, breathless, afraid to stay. He closed the door softly. There were old newspapers piled in the hall, the faint sounds from other apartments, children returning from errands to the store.

In the street he saw on every side, in darkening windows, in reflections, as if suddenly it were visible to him, a kind of chaos. It welcomed, it acclaimed him. The huge tires of buses roared past. It was the last hour of light. He felt the solitude of crime. He stopped, like an addict, in a phone booth. His legs were weak. No, beneath the weakness was something else. For a moment he saw unknown depths to himself, he glittered with images. It seemed he was attracting the glances of women who passed. They recognize me, he thought, they smell me in the dark like mares. He smiled at them with the cracked lips of an incorrigible. He cared nothing for them, only for the power to disturb. He was bending their love towards him, a stupid love, a love without which he could not breathe.

It was late when he arrived home. He closed the door. Darkness. He turned on the light. He had no sense of belonging there. He looked at himself in the bathroom mirror. There was a skylight over his head, the panes were black. He sat beneath the small, nude photograph of a girl he had lived with, the edges were curled, and began to play, the G was sticking, the piano was out of tune. In Bach there was not only order and coherence but more, a code, a repetition which everything depended on. After a while he felt a pounding beneath his feet, the broom of the idiot on the floor below. He continued to play. The pounding grew louder. If he had a car... Suddenly the idea broke over him as if it were the one thing he had been trying to think of: a car. He would be speeding from the city to find himself at dawn on long, country roads. Vermont, no, further, Newfoundland, where the coast was still deserted. That was it, a car, he saw it plainly. He saw it parked in the gentle light of daybreak, its body stained from the journey, a faintly battered body that had survived some terrible, early crash.

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All is chance or nothing is chance. At dinner Jeanine met a man who longed, he said, to perform an act of great and unending generosity, like Genet's in giving his house to a former lover.

"Did he do that?" she asked.

"They say."

It was P. The room was filled with people, and he was speaking to her, quite naturally, as if they had met before. She did not wonder what to say to him, she did not have to say anything. He was quite near. The fine wrinkles in his brow were visible, wrinkles not yet deepened.

"Generosity purifies," he said. He was later to tell her that words were no accident, their arrangement and choice was like another voice speaking, a voice which revealed everything. Vocabulary was like fingerprints, he said, like handwriting, like the body which revealed the invisible soul, which expressed it.

His face was dark, his features deep. He was part of another, a mysterious race. She was aware of how different her own face was with its wide mouth, its grey eyes, slow, curious, clear as a stream. She was aware also that the dress which concealed her breasts, the depth of the chairs, the dimensions of this room afloat now in evening, all of these were part of her immersion into the flow of a great life. Her heart was beating slowly but hard. She had never felt so sure of herself, so bewildered by the ease with which it all was opening.

"I'm suspicious and grasping," he said. He was beginning his confessions. "I recognize that." Later he told her that in his entire life he had only been free for an hour, and that hour was always with her.

She asked no questions. She recognized him. In her own apartment the lights were burning. The air of the city, bitter as acid, was absolutely still. She did not breathe it. She was breathing another air. She had not smiled once as yet. He later told her that this was the most powerful thing of all that had attracted him. Her breasts, he said, were like those of black slave girls in the *National Geographic*.

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Dennis Jarrett

Summer Night

Elmer Fudd
by the fire
bald head shining
feet up on a round cushion

orange, transparent
Pluto sniffs
the perfect hedge
outside the window

a couple of sketchy
suburban houses
with lights on
purple grey
sky

Mickey calling
far off
here boy

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Lorenzo Thomas

Displacement

I

To a lotus beaming in the grime

Behind the house,

The light is very clear

The parasol is painted

We moving
Guy at the
Wheel sd
"I see
They got it
Finished" But
Nothing is
Finished.

Every day someone returns
To the field

Before his wanting becomes a rainbow
He must pause.

The waters rise up
In a dull sheaf

As if miracles were due

But it is only
The harvest;
Only the buffalo's bulk
In the water,

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The new figure of Buddha beside the road
Between Phu Xuan and Tan Thuan Dong
Shivering in the cold
Flood of vast brown sky

II

Wish you were heir
To more naturalness
Than simple lust
For daily bread and restaurants
Where the waiters
Still speak French

Wish you could hear more
In the dark

More than crickets
Your grandfather's cough
Or the songs of
The little fishes

Listen. This is modern times all over the world

Go sit under a tree.

Who studies the physics
Of nonentities?

A facsimile becoming a disguise

Who is not supposed to be reading
This postcard

I am pleased to surprise the people
Any afternoon

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And those who do not
Care to understand
That I know. You know.

Everywhere it is the same thing
Only different.
High officials
Flash by
Hostaged in their
Entourage.

She told me I'm glad
We are not important
We can go walk around
And sit in cheap
Cafés by the road

Saigon, VNCH 1971

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Guerilla Girls

Harbor road is handily lifted
A summer waiting in the sky
Foreigners crowd the landings
She tells me of the Nazi deathcamp,

Some of them the blonds feed
Me bread and safe water
And it is better than nothing.
"How you feel Joe"
She says she was born near San Reys.

Ulla's silk and rayon shift
Repeats properly
Oceans the mind busy positioning
The operation is repeated
Many times per second
Bending down beside the groaning oars
Outside the long shed

Speech,
A receiver continuously responsive and capable

Birds condense in her wool mouth
Underneath her throat knots of recognition.
Can you be busted for fucking
The enemy? The radio is curiously
Still in the tropical night

The walkie talkie is shadowed
And morose. Just like a spring
Which released, goes beyond its usual
Position and then returns,

She releases me from politics
Inside a socialist novel
Which released, goes beyond
Its usual position and then returns, just like
That bathing suit model on the dais at Sak's

1964

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George Pitts

Scars

my father rung poetry up on his typewriter
typing me to what he wanted to be abstract
even fancied me as "son" when me and my girl screwed
while "husband" to the freshly laid seed;
roles would lose shape in love,
our maiden names, son, daughter, not so shapely out in the world
you'd long for a nickname, friend, lover, and hope it stuck; while
there'd always be home, to accommodate and name you
when your appellation stuck like bricks and clung around you like place
one was grateful for little assurances like "ie" and "ly,"
to make you more at ease with yourself: when
"little georgie" or "billy" came to you you'd just weep...
sagas accompanied anyone with pains
a name, merely your kind of wound; surely it hurt
to be spinach, carrot, or so many greens...

father satisfies something devilish inside when he plumbs me Edward, and mother
admittedly I get some equilibrium out of it, but the appetite is no less great
I look up the name and kick it around still
hoping that that nut might crack and let some light...
amiri baraka must have known this being leroi jones so long:
that the bat of your name won't break; and search,
only to head-off some distance, the ground
identically foreign... words knock at your household of mind
threatening to down your roots, a good location
seems more than a lair of books

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Charles Plymell

At a Gas Station in Kansas

The branch of stream and law entwine
lost rail to the stars and back again
while the dandelion sits on a weed
joyous supernal it sits on a weed

A long ride over forgotten roads
crisp kilowatts of radio alone in the night
tracks on Vortex plains erased by gentle snow
like upon the magic board I drew in school

Before the radar screen longed for blind events
like towns alone in night of frost
while snow and wind streaks across the pavement
showing sudden ghosts of fabled lizards

O Gypsy Moth around my lampshade
why so dim the light beyond the door
and the twisted trees reaching to the sky
and down again into their own ring of years

In a month the moon repeats its fundamental note
involuntary stomachs drift to Venus
she repeats hers and within the newborn
yet another aspect opens

Hungry wolves know the beginnings of snow
home to unwind the mummy roll by roll
a part of me, an edge I cannot peer beyond,
a hidden angle, a side I cannot see

In the corner the spider weaves haphazardly
forgetting the first part of the spiral
tired perhaps, of the trembling fly
in a forgotten filling station in Kansas

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Life, Death and Other Dreams

An Eclogue for Gerrit Henry

James Schuyler

They are known as they
Kenward Elmslie

Playin' the hot joints
Takin' the pills
Johnny Cash, "Cocaine Blues"

Ploop
Frank O'Hara

1

They lived like Shakers, with a slight difference: they didn't leave anything out, and they didn't let anyone in.

2

"I love all beauteous things,
I seek and adore them..."

"No wonder the old grouch got to be such a crab. He was travel tired: footsore, weary and blue."

"Footsore? English shoes really are very well made. At least they used to be. They called them, boots."

Robert Bridges led them up the garden path, which was lined on either side by narrow beds of white pinks. The moist green English air was charged to saturation with a smell like cloves,

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only more so, and better. They were making a sensuous scene. Nearby, the towers of Oxford glittered and flashed in the starless night like the lumps in a bottle of rock and rye.

3

"All things are relative. I mean, all things are relatives. 'There's a wee bit o'gold in the gray of your hair,' i.e., trace element."

"What a downer. Stop rapping and lie on top of me. Move down a little further. No, up a little more. Right."

"I'm..."

"Stop rapping."

4

"Say, or, by the way, or, look, or, hey, you, Chihuahua: Didn't somebody write something called, *Wishes, Lies and Dreams*?"

"Could be. Then there's that spick who wrote *La Vida es un Sueño*. Christ, how I hate words like, 'spick.'"

They talked dirty.

5

They put on the most driven, the ugliest recording of *La Traviata* they could find (Toscanini's). They put French sleeping wax in their ears. They went to the control panel and turned everything hard right, except the bass, which they turned hard left. The night was bronze. They flipped the switch. At the first note the neighborhood awoke with a start, under the impression that Chamfort was reading aloud to them in a raging sewer. Thumps, yells, execrations, poundings from all sides, from below, from above. A POOR WOMAN, stated the last Trump, or the Great Darning Needle, whatever

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it was, IN THIS POPULOUS DESERT THAT THEY DO CALL PARIS. Many, perhaps all, phoned the police, who had other fish to fry and were good and hungry. Fumes drifted about the room in an interestingly gauzy way: they were in a bathosphere of love, submerged in a sea of hate. When Alfredo threw the bag of money at Violetta's feet, Etna lost its cool, and the neighborhood was spared—or denied—the ultimate effect: The Cough.

6

"What a fuck! moving, and deeply felt."

7

"Let's get rid of the junk."

"Get rid of the junk!" ?!?!

"Not that junk: all the other junk."

They sold the basalt tea service, the Wedgewood mourning ware (place settings for eighteen), Robespierre's curl, the Brunelleschi floor plan, the this, the that. They were comfortably off.

8

"What are you reading?"

"Dear only knows."

9

"Wanna try it with the lights off?"

10

"And now, I'm going to scrub you down with the Milan Cathedral."

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11

They shaved. They went out. They dined, they drank, they took a walk, they bought an oriental calculating device and dropped it in an ashcan.

"What is this place anyhow?"

They were encircled by straight lines.

"Slab City."

12

"I wouldn't care if I dropped dead tomorrow."

"Not a possible state of mind."

"It's mine, at the moment."

"To sustain."

"I didn't say, 'I wouldn't care if I dropped dead *today*:' I mean, I *like* life that much. And I don't love life, I like it: a more constant feeling."

"You lost me."

"Then I want to die now, this second. I wish I had, just before you spoke. I would not have heard that."

They hugged and kissed and threw the plastic bleach jug full of popper juice out the window. It bounced when it hit and the loosely secured cap came off, creating unanticipated turmoil among some passing protesters. Placards on sticks were everywhere. They were inscribed:

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O'HARA PAPERBACK POEMS
NOT COMPLETE WORKS KILL KILL
P*E*A*C*E B*A*B*Y
Vote for Bella Abzug

Clothing in fashionable muted tones mingled with the dog shit, the car farts and the activity at a nearby fire.

"Litterbugging."

"Truly a trip, and a rare one."

"Not since we made it with Lytton Strachey in Ottoline Morel's gray drawing room, it's long windows streaming with yellow taffeta curtains. Even the light came."

aside: "Did you know that her grandfather, the Duke of Portland, was mad?"

not aside: "I never found him so."

"Time to break out the *Chateau Yquem*."

"No ..... it's a good trip—but it's not a great one. Or even if it is a great one: I'll put it this way: Get the *vin de paille*."

"You're always right and you're never wrong."

13

"Did you know that Catherine the Great died, straining at the stool?"

"So did George II. Now may I go on with my book?"

Watch it fellows: The best laid relationships can deteriorate—a strain here, a strain there.

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14

Their forged prescription slips were the unsung wonder of the day.

15

"Funny, our being the only two—or one, for the matter of that—who know, in precise detail the event chain immediately preceding the recovery of the drowned King Ludwig of Bavaria, his foolhardy and equally drowned doctor clutched in his (Ludwig's) powerful embrace."

Taste flew out the window, along with a Sense of Values, The Stern Daughter of the Voice of Time, and a set of William Dean How- ...—Please! no personalities.

"Some scholars think one thing, others another, and at least one has an open mind." A distant—but no less hideous for that—shriek of pain was heard. By them. They lashed Richard Wagner to a gilded date palm (San Carlo Opera House) and the overture to *La Gioconda* struck. About Noon in "The Dance of the Hours" R.W. went into catatonic shock. They relented, unlocked the padlock, wrapped him in burlap and mailed him home, along with some squid and a few sea urchins for Cosima. They went up on stage and joined the soprano in a rousing rendition of, *Suicidio*!

...in questi
Fieri momenti
* * * * * * *
Ultima croce
Del mio cammin.

The harmony got pretty close. The Neapolitan fatties in their homemade silks were sent way out there, far, far beyond i Fariloni, Capri and the bourne.

"Get the piss cubes, the toe jam and..." surely, informed and gentle reader, these things need not be spelt out? Detail is such a drag.

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17

"I want a mixmaster."

"Baby, I am at your side."

18

"Dig a little leather?"

Shrug.

They got into their Chesterfield sofa drag, hung swastikas around their necks (swastikas with the arms going the other way: what a put-down! a genuine send-up) and creaked off to Lasher Lane. THE DIVINE MARQUIS: BARS AND GRILLS: walls hung with hangman's knots and trophies of chain and motor hog parts; buzz saw chandelier; busts and statuettes of fun-loving figures of history: Torquemada; Nero with matchbook; Sawney Bean; Papa Doc. The Ilse Koch bridge lamp was possibly a fake; though an able one. A giant tinted photograph of the late Joseph Stalin loomed and smiled beneficently down. Autographed too: *With abiding love from your Uncle Joe.* But who reads Russian? Printed mottoes:

TOO MUCH IS JUST
NOT ENOUGH

SUFFER, LITTLE CHILDREN

BEYOND THE PLEASURE
PRINCIPLE

BE A BLOOD DONOR

and so on. Oh yes. A set of Felicien Rops illustrations for *The Chinese Torture Garden*. The sawdust reeked of—never mind.

"Classy. Harmony in bruise tones. Bold, but not too bold."

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"Heard on the gropeline that Headless Hannah got a mint. For doing it."

"Yeah. A mint compounded of Spanish fly, Absorbine Jr. and cholera lice."

Clank clank: the bartender. "Your wish, master?" he pleaded.

"Budweisers—on the rocks and straight up, slave." Ear Indian burn: beatific grin.

A few of the boys were there, playing dress-ups and shooting pool. One had his mouth taped shut. "Piss up my nose, Mister?" They could not quite make out what he was saying.

They fed the juke box: "Beat me, Daddy, 8 to the Bar;" the great great Mickey Rooney at his greatest, "Treat me Rough (Muss my Hair);" and unforgettable, "Primitive Man." They turned respectful ears to these classic laments—then intrusion intervened.

Thus to them addressed a blond asp with cloudy eyes these words:

"Got a cabin cruiser: care to join me and a couple of buddies and head out from Montauk?" They replied in Stoney Stares. "Sea bass are running," added the albino Dragon Lady. His slim long fingers—they had a few superfluous joints and the nails were à la Camorra: sharp points, tipped with industrial diamonds—tenderly scratched at a large economy size bag of Portland cement.

They delivered their blackout line as in one voice: "Get away from me before I slice you up into ladies' leather wallets." It was a swiped gag, it was an old gag, they had used it often—and it never failed.

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19

"Violence is never right—outside the home, that is, of course."

"You're the milk in my cambric tea but you sure are ONE DUMB DORA."

20

They paid a visit to the nicotine pit. They got it up to a couple of brace of Larks a day (i.e., two cartons each per demi-diem) and went cold turkey. *My dear, I tell you...*

"Visit the Met Museum."

"You're on."

Niagaras of sweat and all atremble "like aspen leaves upon a lute" they got as far as the bannered hall of metal men and were promptly asked to leave. The carbon steel armour was breaking out in rust spots. Sloshing great footprints behind them, like Abominable Snowmen in a thaw, they reached the porch and stumbled and fell down the steps, scarcely noticing what have got to be the world's worst fountains (giant trough urinals with reverse piss). They yelled and screamed and moaned at flocks of illuminated cabs. Understandably, none stopped. They were arrested by a heavy-set gentleman in blue, hustled to the station, charged with: creating a disturbance; loitering with intent; possession of a silver flask containing a suspicious fluid (*eau de vie de framboise*); addressing an officer in ill-chosen words; and hurled into the Tomb. The service was not all that great. At a later date, they were let out again.

21

"I'm not so sure I liked that. Once you've been in jail, there is a, well, kind of stain on your name, so to speak. In some people's eyes, anyway; and even if their eyes have sleep crowns in the corners, I mind; a little."

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"Forget it."

22

They took in a musical. On the marquee it said, in melancholy letters on a white ground:

B O O S T I N G

Long loud cheesy overture.

CONDUCTOR: Cool it.

The band plays on and stops when good and ready. Up the great gold curtain. Thunder, lightning flashes, light drizzle on audience. Inner crimson velvet curtains sweep apart. Release Brazilian killer bees. Asbestos curtain rises: *lento lentissimo*.

Scene: An emporium, totally crammed with objects, some more choice than others. THE PROPRIETOR, a buxom woman in the midst of life, is alone on stage. Enter a MAN.

MAN: Porcupine quill pen and don't keep me waiting I'm on a rush. (He fondles her ass)

PROPRIETOR: Easy on the bakemeats, buster. She picks up a machete and deftly severs the offending hand from its wrist. While she is thus distracted the MAN pops into his off-side pocket small articles: Rolaids, a Lady Bulova watch, etc. Here the actor may improvise—*up to a certain point*. MAN departs hastily. PROPRIETOR picks up turkey feather duster and commences to dust. Enter CHORUS OF TEN. Possibly that from the old Cotton Club, or possibly not. The CHORUS is played by one giant show girl. She must convincingly indicate presence of other nine non-present show girls. It does not matter how she does this. However, *should she fail*—CHORUS (title song)

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Boosting

Boosting, boosting
boo boo boo boo
Boost boost boost
troubles away
Boost boost boost
part of each day etc.

Thus the slow progression toward the inevitable intermission.

23

The velvet curtains—possibly real velvet, loomed in Leeds by a Loiner—dense with dust and star-clutch curtain-call sweat, swept closed. Houselights. Shuffle blatter shove.
"Your ass is in my face, madame."
"You need not, therefore, chew my girdle. Desist. You are danking my Dior."
"Christ! My beads!"
"Eff your effing beads, babe, and take that stiletto heel out of my bunion."
"Why don't you go back where you came from you— you alien."
"...bartender bartender bartender..."
"Bee Man's Pep Sin? What's? That?"
"...curtain going up curtain going up..."
"...bartender bartender I beg I implore..."
"That is one pack of filter tip double Queen length Lady Rhodas in the floral pack. That you want. Which will be, $2.75. Plus tax. At 6%. It is a fact: I cannot do my multiplication tables in my head: mumble buzz: do you use matches? My boy, he collects matches. The folders, that is. He is forty-nine and dreams of finishing high school. At home. With me. In a moment, *sir*: can you not see that I am occupied in serving this *gentleman*? We live off Riverside Drive on..."
"Eleven sidecars, a Singapore sling and..."

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"Curtain going..." Smoke puff cough choke gag spit cigar-butt-urinal charm.
"We got Sacramento Valley rye, flat fizz and chlorinated sump water. Snap it up. I haven't got all night."
"Curtain going, curtain going: do I hear $275,000?"
"...shoved the whole shebang off the shelf, cooled it at a grand a share, *nor* skipped he off to Rio."
"Oh wow."
"Mints? *You* are asking *me* for a *bag* of after-dinner *mints*?"
"...gone gone gone..."
"I wish a gin and tonic. Make it a double. And skip the fruit wedge George or I will feed you through this transistorized platinum pocket parsley mincer."
"Yes! Sir!"
Scream.
"There is PHLEGM on my TRAIN! It is got YIK on it!"

24

"How many ways do I love you? Clad, half-clad, starkers, erect, recumbent, tumescent, down right limp. Snoring. Smiling—as now—eyes shut, almost asleep. I love your fingers. They unlax, they unfurl. You are floating away from me on a dark, salt, refreshing tide. I will tell you softly and more softly still of the many ways I love you and gently ease my voice to a thread, to an all but invisible strand of silk loosened—so lightly—from the cocoon of sleep, unseen, within you. Dream. I love you, a whole dream world away from me, far as Mars and further than the Pleiades, who are seven. You no longer hear my voice: its "baltering torrent is shrunk to a soodling." I will, all loving all of you, cease, now, to speak."
"Go on. I'm listening."
"Dear heart!"

25

They contracted childhood diseases. Their immunities became intense.
"Nothing ever changes."
"Whine whine."

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They practiced what they would have preached had they been preachers and soon had mouth-to-mouth resuscitation down to a soft-shoe shuffle.

26

They received an invite to mingle with some upper hoi—. It did not have gilded edges. It didn't need any. You just knew it was there: the chocolate candy coins skinned with gold foil, the mazuma mazuma, the what it takes to get up out of bed and take a shit in your own best crockery (unless you wanna do it in the gutter: that's your trip, baby): yes, folks, they had IT, the curly cress that tastes of ink and horny fingers, printed on Crane's best notepaper, the kind with nosegays of zeros in each corner, preceeded by a digit.

A minor general hustled to open the door of the cab they had long since left. They did not tip him. He cursed them up, he cursed them down, he cussed them out: *in brogue*. They toiled across the lobby. O quarries of travertine, will you never run out? Or is it you who are the hint, the key, the clue, perhaps the Thing itself: the (seemingly) impossible: inexhaustible supply. In truth, it was all sleazy bleached Kasota stone—who cares. They did. Distantly a kettle drummishness gave them a twinge of ear freak: some tons of prisms had hit the deck, one and a ½ light days ago. Upward whizz. Mountain sickness. Ninetieth floor, all of it, trimmed with Terror Terrace (nylon thread balustrades). An automaton—the masterwork of a raft of mastercraftsmen and the wizard of Menlo Park: The Hostess. Arms of chryselephantine lifted and parted, palms down: one hand each to do with as each pleased: squeeze, lick, pat, slap; but not exactly shake. The eyes—lavender transplants, the best—were wet with joy, the costliest. The lips parted. Click. "This is a prerecorded message. 'I am so HAPPY you could COME!' If you have anything to say—and it better be good—wait for the beep."

Upon these hands they lowered eyes like fish-eye lenses: the gaze of a beads, gems and watches connoisseur who really

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knows his stuff and don't take no lip from nobody, most of all when nobody ain't said nuthin'. They studied the collection.

"Uhnn."

"Not top."

"The blue ruby knuckle duster?"

"*That* is THE most famous FAKE in the entire world, plus Saturn, Mars and Jupiter..." Rage stutter. "FOOL! CRETIN! IDIOT!"

They raised gazes and looked at its face. The smile had grown merely a little warmer, but the eyes had subtly changed. Out of them streamed the aurora borealis, smoking hot.

Their faces reddened, peeled, healed and darkened to the desired tan: a ruddy, healthy glow. They split.

"Better than Bermuda: cheaper, no hit-and-run bicycle riders...."

"Bermuda? Who needs it, Tweedwits. Domenica."

27

"Reality starts in a checkbook."

"Speak for yourself, Miles."

28

They stopped for a traffic light. So did a Rolls. It was *that* shade of green—you know, the one that isn't black—or maybe it was maroon. They could scarcely tell, so turned on were they by the attar of roses clouds of its exhaust. An imported, hand-picked chauffeur graced the wheel. He too was a human being. On the back seat, cloistered in the regal solitude it so richly deserved,

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reclined a throw pillow. Petit point. Imperial yellow ground. Edged with red, the reddest red. Not a thin red line, not a thick red line: just right. In orange Bodoni:

THIS IS MY CAR
AND I'LL SIT
WHERE I DAMN
PLEASE

"Molotov cocktail time?"

"Embroidery is an honorable hobby, like any other."

The light changed. The car rolled forward, clashing its gears.

There they stood, too zonked to move.

29

"Read the directions."

"I can't even read my palm in this murk. Put on the strobe. That's besser, baby. Says here it says, 'to ball for eight continuous hours... something something...' What it boils down to is, get a light liquor high, throw in the upper of your choice, toke away at the Nepalese Blue Streak Hash, and keep the amyl handy."

"Nothing about henbane, belladonna or angel dust?"

"One can but try."

30

They went to the Rainbow room, and groveled at its wondrous décor. They had the whole dump to themselves and made the most of it. All around the twilight lay shattered into mauve, canary and blue tourmaline. No clouds troubled its

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repose as the day died into itself. They issued forth upon a balcony. They addressed the night.

"O Alva! Alva!"

"O flow! budding out in fragile glass"

"as though the living and the dead had fled, leaving phosphorescent shells."

"O Steinmetz, Steinmetz, Steinmetz!"

"And waterfalls that change and charge the night with fatal 'don't chew on me' wirings!"

"O monotony, peopled invisibly"

"Parks, offices and murderous squalor"

"Here and there lights go on..."

"and the unperceivable is seen..."

"in the rhythm of the swelling and subsiding sea..."

"no wave breaks"

"O Davy Davy Davy"

"O blue TV"

"and Waring blender, automated pencil sharpener, burglar alarm, electric toothbrush"

"O wattage"

"fluent and tappable"

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"O phone"

"Alexander Graham Bell and Mrs Bell"

"And everyone, all talking at once or snoring or suckie-fuckie"

"City, you name it, you got it"

"She thinks, I can no more, and shakes the pills into her palm"

"She thinks, so many years to wait for love and Oh boy, was it worth it"

"He thinks, did I give, or get, a bum steer?"

"Darkness darkens and struggling against its tug more lights come on and more"

"water lilies whose stems the water drags and they flower"

"lights beyond all flowers!"

"O flowering flux!"

"O. Henry! O. Henry! O. Henry, O. Henry!"

"He said 'Turn up the lights; I don't want to go home in the dark'"

"And died"

"Bright embroidery of sound"

"Taxis, limousines, the common hog or 'motorcycle,' Vespas and motorskates"

"All this splendor and it is not ours"

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"I would groove in silence"

"If I could: lights! lights! lights!"

"And roomy rainbow"

"flashing from blue steel: guns, and knives and terror"

"Squeal?"

"Was that an accident?"

"Or a near thing?"

"There is no one to question, there is no one to ask"

"About the afterlife: have you a thought?"

"City called Miracle, what do you think?"

"If this is very heaven, how acceptable to the senses might be..."

"It is such a little thing to be born of woman"

"O hard-faced death with Grecian nose"

"Are you Miss Liberty?"

"Answer! Answer! Answer!"

"O free will! honey, baby..."

"Flipping switches"

"Randomly at large"

"It is such a little thing"

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"To be born of woman"

"And to die. O shining city"

"O fatal sting"

"All that is strongest and most frail"

"honors you"

"O New York City"

"O secular sublime"

31

They took a trip and crossed the Natural Bridge. Below, in the chasm, the gulf, the rain engorged arroyo, were pearly depths, in whose whorls lurked hideous monsters that snapped and harrowed (by monsters is meant: the neighbors—the man who comes to read the meter—a lady in galoshes selling raffle tickets, etc.).

32

They invited Holly Woodlawn to join them in a visit to the Necropolis. She was busy, starring. They went anyway. There were an awful lot of people there, tucked up to the chin and beyond, only the headboards of stone bedsteads poked through the blades.
"Like sooty dominoes."
"Nonsense."
And each in the ghetto of his choice: Jew bones by Jew bones, recusant by recusant, Neuter Baptists, Moondog followers, Hutterites, Millerites, Seventh Day Adventists (women who gave birth once a week), Pickled Pig Fat Eaters, Slaves of the Lotus, Worshippers of the Squishy Banana.
"Shall we honor the dead?"
"What for? They're a thankless crew."

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They split a rainy day pill. (It was not about to rain: that was the name of the pill). Nothing much happened, unless you count the neon liana thread webs and the sun, whose fingers nervously clutched and grabbed at them for about eight hours, a hailstorm or two, the lightning bolt bundles, the edible Goodyear blimp. They downed on sheepshit, encapsulated in gelatin of a thrilling transparency.

"Pretty sluggish ride, all in all. Better than *Gone With the Wind*, maybe?"

"STOP COMPARING."

"O, wow, man. When you raise your voice to me—and you never do—it turns me on to *Written on the Wind* and I'm it: Dorothy Malone, Daddy dying, Rock Hudson and Robert Stack, the oil derricks, all of it, all of it."

Crunch.

They broke a widgeon off the High Holy Hash, got out the meerschaum—its bowl, a bust of William Tell—and had a smoke. Moonlight seeped into the room, between the floorboards.

33

They sent a nice note to Sir Basil Liddel Hart, thanking him for his history of World War II. They told him how much they enjoyed it. Excessive praise, but sincere. The note arrived in time for the funeral.

34

"Ought we not go to Russia and spit on the graves of Mayakovsky and Pasternak, Pushkin, Tolstoy and Tuytchev? Not out of hate—out of contempt for fame."

"No, we oughtn't. Wait. You may have something there. Get the kerosene and we'll discuss it."

35

They put on their sox, sat back, relaxed and lit up a Camel. You can imagine how the creature felt. This one was by Stieff,

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out of F.A.O. Schwartz. It cost—well—plenty. It was the money they wanted to burn.

36

Inveterate nighters—first nighters, closing nighters, by-pop-demand-absolu-last-chance nighters, middle of the flop nighters—they frequented matinees and previews where their presence went unnoted, save by Carl Van Vechten: him, they intrigued. The deliciously wicked Mr Van V. made an intriguingly naughty pastiche *à propos de ces gens-là* (pastiche? de Sade, a few nodding-out thoughts of Anatole France, the Russian ballet midout Nijinsky, Karsavina, Fokine or the sets) and sent it to a friend in Europe.

Mr Firbank put aside a grape, a grape of dawn-pale green, the morning mist of its bloom brushed and untroubled by prints, fingerprints: "*perceptuably upon the lea were reeds*," opened the envelope, extracted the letter and held it, gingerly, at arms length, not unnear his knee. Distinctly, yes, there was an (his nostrils troubled not to quiver) aroma: a railway station sandwich scent: prosciutto on something unchewable: *thick* prosciutto. From an hotel balcony arose thin wings of air-mail stationery blue (a kind of gray), the letter, fluttering to join some doves in their evening peregrination of the sky.

He also mentioned them, *en passant*, in a book length missive to Miss G. Stein. In reply, Alice B. toasted a postcard: "Dear V.V.'s Eyes, Can the prattle and make with the steam. Tender B.'s is the topic, Mable the Dodge the subj't. G.S. fit to be tied and dyed. May you walk with God. Miss Toklas." Thus it was they experienced a mixed media marathon of some length. Sample: The letter aria from *Onegin*: love, love, love, orgasmic love: cut to silent movie lawyer's office tough kewpie doll blonde in satin and poils: Title:

I want you should take the
old geezer for every last
red cent he's got, Hymie.
Them letters is red hot:

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they are the goods.

I believe we understand
each other, Miss LaVerne.

37

They took the green pill bus trip to Vermont. How gray it was that hot summer! All roads were dust and dust was everywhere. Most notably on the gray and giant mullein whose yellow flowers were obscured in an ashes-to-ashes look.
"King's candle."
A nothing gesture was the reply, one expressive of: "It is not humanly possible for you to shut up, anywhere, ever, is it. Oh. Well."
They found that village boneyard with the stone which was the objective of this fleeting tour.

HERE LIES SILENCE
HIS WIFE

The green pill has little staying power, so: they popped some uppers, toked at the Blue Streak, stripped, sloshed down a bottle or so of Uncle Fredleigh's Apple Wine and wheezing, sneezing, eyes awash with hay fever gunk, did it in the dust. They called it, *The Mortal Storm*. A fine time was had by all.

38

A pause for reflection.

39

What with paying the pusher, coughing up for the contact, all the little sundries of Wistful Vista, the cash ran low. They needed—no, they wanted: records, books and Brooks Brothers suits. Also some haberdashery. So they wrote a best seller. It was easy. It was not one of your flash in the pan fancy Dan type best sellers either: it was the real Britannica. They called it, *The How Book*. And I tell you Heloise, if a lot of jokers got off some good ones at their pseudonymous expense—"The Fanny Farmer of the Funny Farm"—it was jake with 'Myrtle Tilbush' because it is a fact, a silver dollar *will*

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roll upon the ground
because it's round.

Other sorts of currency more or less floated, drifted and strolled into varied accounts and wound up, nicely spaced on paper that is hard to bend, in the village stocks. Another stream from the inscrutable source wended into a tin box, which was not stashed under the bed. The box, to its intense content, lived in a serried row with others of its kind, beyond a thick round door off which the light flashed. A nice door, a hand-made door, and one of many parts: tumblers, prattfalls: all that's needful to keep good paper from the damp.
How's about a sample or so?

40

from: Attending a Job Interview
Job: *Your name, I take it, is Mr Hoare.*
Mr Hare: *Approximately. My name is Augustus J. C. Hare.*
Job: *You are not, perchance, a connection of Alfred A. Hoare, author of* A Short Italian Dictionary, *an invaluable work to which I frequently refer, published by CUP? A distant, possibly a remote, cousin?*
Mr Hare: *I am appreciative of the compliment you would, it appears, wish to intend. Indubitably, that Mr Hoare is a species of cousin, one as remote, I trust, as the nearest banana munching baboon. My own Italian is superb. The word, by the way, for which you so vainly fished is* not *author: it is compiler. I myself would hesitate to use 'compilation' of that egregious concatenation of foreign scribblings followed by—HAH!—definitions of which I will not speak. To be lucid, I would not touch Hoare's* Short, *no, not even with a ten-foot mamba.*
Job: *I see, I see. You understand Mr Hoare that, though a certain vacancy exists among our researchers here on our staff, within this monolithic dream (Rockefeller Center, I cannot clasp thee close enough! Gilt Prometheus! Skaters upon the cat's ice of my mind! Many chambered heart! You dazzler you!), there also exists a stockpile of the anxiously over-educated upon which we may freely*

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draw. We pay dirt: they are overjoyed to haunt our stacks by day and by night and by artificial light and do our bidding. It's the free air conditioning that does the trick. Now, Mr Hoare, would you tell me a little about yourself?

Mr Hare: *Gladly. Nay, willingly. I was a child. Quite a young child. I had a pet. A pet rabbit. Or a dog or a cat. I forget, that part becomes confused. I had been bad. I was a bad child, a very bad child. I was too fond of my pet. I deserved to be punished. They meant no wrong. I swear to you that they did no wrong. I don't know what happened. They took it, my pet, out into the barn and hung it with a rope. It died. It strangled. I—Calvin! Calvin! my pet, where are you?—I—*
Job: *Mr Hoare, kindly arise from the floor and, without bothering to count to two, turn round and leave my office. O-U-T spells out.*
Mr Hare: *I will leave, toad, in my own good time. My name is Augustus J. C. Hare. You may read about me in my* The Story of My Life *(six vols.). My ghost stories are sheer witchery. My spacious handbooks, such as* Walks Near Rome, *even in these dilapidated days are found by many—by the few who count—viable, more viable than any* Italy on a Nickel a Day *drool liable to issue—but I grow rude. I, sir, in my time, was never deemed other than a gentleman. Would that I might say as much of you. Bedlamite, good day.*

41

Dressing Wounds
Sphagnum moss makes a fine dressing for wounds.

42

Dressing for Dinner
No longer done.

43

Old Fashioned Turkey Dressing
Follow directions on Bell's Poultry Seasoning box.

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44

From the chapter, Pitching Woo

Dear Desolation of My Heart,

I can be sad, so very sad, and over such little things. Our love is not a little thing, no more than the idea of a god, or electricity, or learning Greek in order to read Hesiod.

These few flat flowers (see enclosure) I gathered where your skirt has brushed. I went out at night with my Eveready flashlight and, flicking it on and off, hastily picked these dying moments where, from the sewing room window, I thought I saw you pause, en route to the mill and your job. I am sad that I cannot know, for certain, that these are the pallid blooms that you stopped to regard. Or perhaps you stopped, unseeingly, to muse? At times you notice so little, and at other times, so much. It makes me sad, not knowing.

You say that you love me, that my great love for you is returned with a bonus: you even said that, if it were possible, you would not mind seeing me, from time to time. I told you I ask no more, and indeed I am filled by your words, your nods and infrequent becks, with a great joy, a joy far greater than any sadness these clumsily pressed mementos betoken.

And yet. And yet. I am so sad today. You are not mine: we have considered this in all its aspects, and in accepting all provisos and prohibitions, I felt a rising radiance like that of an artesian fountain or a riderless pony baring its teeth to the wind. I am sorry I am sad, I know it irks you. You said, by word and by deed, that only joy, happiness, good health and smiles are acceptable to you.

I should destroy this letter. Perhaps I will.

And yet. In the prairie of my love for you, extending beyond any visible horizon, there are these gopher holes of small gloom: warrens of skinny sadness. Sadness is a meager emotion, and in telling you of it, I may lose all, thus making it a terrible and great thing, a love gone wrong. The thought of it fills me with terror and irritation. Truthfully now, would you wish me to go always about with the fixed grin of rigor mortis? It would frighten the wits out of my grandchildren to see their normally gloomy granny in such a state.

Yes, I must risk all and take this letter to our own oh! so private letter drop in the blasted oak. Sad or happy, I am yours.

(Inscribed, to Mabel from her Mavis)

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45

Among other chapters:
GETTING THE MOST OUT OF WELFARE
MONOCHROMATIC COOKERY
ARSON
SANDALS AND SADDLERY
THE BLUES (1)
" " (2)
AGNOSTIC BURIAL SERVICES
THE COW, USES AND ABUSES
SECULARITY
TO GROW AND HARVEST FLAX
BUILD YOUR OWN VIBRATOR
THE ART OF DISGUISE
" " " DISH DISPOSAL
ART (all phases)
TEACH YOURSELF DEAFNESS
ESP AND THE INVESTOR
POISONOUS HOUSE PLANTS
TRANSLATIONS AND APPROXIMATIONS
From the latter, comes this approximation of a translation of Tyutchev, based on his name, and an interesting book by Gregg.

46

Clump Birches

Pale arms, bruised and scarred and with sooty rings, raised and opened to embrace!

Wandering chalk lines on the black and soppy woodland of my heart, among you I pass unseeingly and the distant train goes hoo, in echo of the abandoned one's thought. Growing crookedly (it is not your fault!) and hung with leaves that fall in haste and with dispatch fade from lovely colors, quickly as the loved one's love for the beloving one failed, so quickly as to question whether said love ever existed save in the quondam lover's strolling bemusement. Is it possible, white birches, that he ever loved and moved among you, seeing spring green

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on white, a celebration of the youth of love in the heart of one who, in diplomat's garb, he—the one of serious mien—saw white and green as living emblems of the vessel of his empty heart so suddenly aslosh with May wine?

It is the winter of the year and of one's life, a hopeless case, and yet, this too must be borne with, as must this snow scene in which your trunks rise, smirched. "I have been too happy," she said, trailing away, an egret in search of its true clime. Birches! birches! how filthy you look in the snow!

And if I were the Czar, and truly, I long to be he, my first unreasonable command would be, "Cut down the birch trees, saw them into logs." Then, this scene I see would hold a mirror to my heart: the murk of evergreens, home of fly agaric and the vestal death cup amanita, for its white is truly the white of deception, to kiss and flee away, oh short-lived as love, clump birches.

47

"I've been thinking about the orgasm."
"And?"
"Oh nothing. I've just been thinking about it."

48

"It will soon be winter."
"Frozen slush."
"A feeling of discontent pervades the money capital."
"Capitol?"
"Our days pass pleasantly enough—people die and move away, going west—and the appropriate emotion comes, so to speak, to hand. What we do or do not feel, is appropriate because true."
"Yes, it is a good some while since I thought, 'Oh dear, another goner. I ought to feel more (or less) than this blank surprise.'"
"True. You are not so nice as when I met you. Niceness stood in the way of evolving into yourself, not that there will ever be a static you, unchanging as a seated green bronze Fitz-Green Halleck."

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"Oh I wouldn't care for that at all."
"Do you feel the need of a hobby?"
"Why no. Do you?"
"You know me better than that. Turn over. I want to examine your back through the magnifying glass. A blackhead may lurk among the freckles."
"So long as it's not the other way round. You wouldn't prefer to take a long stroll among the office workers and the rising towers, the fenestrated phalli of, well, this place?"
"Mahjong?"
"Cribbage?"
"Parchesi? Scrabble? Double solitaire? Pounce?"
"Honeymoon bridge?"
"Brooklyn Bridge is more like it. A heartening tooling among the gulls, the pigeons and their droppings. A view of the tugs among the mercantile fleet, burrowing away like voles with their voracious need to unceasingly eat."
"Look, rooster, let's talk turkey: only on condition you won't pretend you're going to hurl me off the bridge and into the harbor."
"Sure. Promise anything. You know I don't keep promises. And what makes you so sure I was pretending? I may simply have changed my mind."
"Then for sure it's mahjong."
They dressed and went out.

49

"So what am I supposed to do: get down on my knees and thank The Finger for dreaming up the impossible dream, Adolf the red-nosed rug chewer? 'That'll be a spritzer—club soda and gypsy blood, shtoopid—and a broiled Jew chop. *Und* don't forget the mustard sauce *oder, Maxie, ich mach mit einem Dachau fahrt.*' "
"How about some stein songs from *Der Freischütz*?"
"God is thank God only another sick figment of Man (Dreaming Lips) Kind's endlessly ingenious gift for dreaming up yet fresher way to delude, entrap and torment—not himself: mankind is not a self—one another. You, me, each of us. Too much

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and too long. Kill the professors. Take the churchs down stone by stone. Ditto the Capitol: all the Capitols: the white Capitol, the one in Albany, the red Capitol, the State House, the House of Burgesses, City Hall. Money, religion and art. Venice? Don't let it sink into the sea, push it in. It is stone, cement, bronze, glass, cloth and a very little paint. It is in the way. Get rid of it."

"Why, that's mere anarchy!"

"Watch it, or you could get to be the first to go. Anarchy! If that's all we got left, gimme."

"You turn my stomach. I'm sorry I ever let you pick me off the meat rack under the blue park lamps. You're worse than a dose of bleeding piles."

"Good. You're mad. Maybe you're waking up. Blood. If that's what it takes to clean up the mess, then blood is what it's going to be. Blood. Blood on the sheets, on the walls, in the streets and the subways, in the water cooler and the ladies' room: and not just blood on a whiter than white vaginal insert. Somebody's fingernails; somebody's bleeding ripped out tongue; somebody disemboweled and bleeding and if you don't know what disemboweled means, it means I pick up *this* knife, and shove it in your belly right *here*, like *that*, and yank it up and pull it out—throw away the toy, *there*—and reach my hand in and get a fistful and drag out your bloody hot shit-filled guts: and they do not come loose all that easily. How does that grab you?"

"I would give my blood, my mind, my soul whatever that is, whatever love I ever felt or could have felt—and that's a lot—if, for a minute, for one split second, I could believe in an after life and die in the certainty that you would burn in the pit of hell for all eternity, just like an electric barbecue spit somebody forgot to turn off. Turn off! you totally turn me off."

"Good. At last. Maybe we can make it: because, kid, don't kid yourself, you can't leave hate out. It's there, like blood. Here. Take this Lady Schick injector stainless steel blade with the plutonium edge, keener than keen, and cut my arm. Right here. Flesh is flesh and flesh bleeds. I want you to see it bleed and know, for once if not for all, that blood and hate are real, red and real as roses. Take it and cut."

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"No."
"Do it."
"Never. Good day, good morning, good afternoon, good evening star, and, good night. Tootle loo goodbye. *Je pars*: I go: *pour toujours*: Forever."
"Bye bye, Manon, bye bye. But don't count on big brother making with the shoulder and the hankie when you take the final zonk down in the dismal swampland and start in on the, '*Ah, la belle diamant*!' whine."
"Up your freaked off arse gratia arsehole head, you busted-brasier-eared gorgon."
"Miss worm turns. You sure took your time about it, Shirley: loveable, pokable you. Dreamer, dream on."
And so on. They, too, had their little spats.

50

"You look sad."
"I am."
"Why?"
"I was thinking, what will become of me if anything happens to you?"
"Is that a wish?"
"No. An excuse to indulge my sadness. I'm never sad with you."
"How about the time I went to the store and didn't ask if I could bring you anything."
"That wasn't sadness. That was pique."
"If you say so. Do you want anything from the store? We're fresh out of French ticklers."
"Ditto Lubriderm."
"Isn't there something personal, just for you, you want?"
"Not a thing. Though I'm rather hurt that you don't ask me to come with you."
"Well, sometimes I like to be alone."
"To the store and back isn't much in the way of solitude."
"OK. Come with me."
"Never. I mean, not today."
So they put on their coats and watch caps and went out. A blizzard was in progress. Stalled cars everywhere: the snow-

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plows couldn't get through. They helped one man rock his car until it got out of the icy ruts and crawled forward a few yards. The Pleasure Chest was shut, but the walk was invigorating and blew the cobwebs away.
"Myriad flakes."
"A single whiteness."
"Desperate for the destitute."
"But beautiful."
"The sun shines and we can't see it."
"The snow stops, the moon rises, looters approach the stalled cars for leftovers."
"A family dies because of a snow-blocked exhaust."
"But we don't die."
"No. Not today."

51

"You're bleeding."
"So I see."

52

"Welcome to the transit strike," said one to the other. Heavy men (thin ones, too) stood around blocking subway entrances and exits and telling people at bus stops to move on or.... No trains or buses were running so the shoving and hustling was all in fun. Rough fun, but wholesome.
"I urgently wish to go north—what is it, two hundred blocks? —and give the unicorn tapestry a reprise."
"Everyone here is so happy when anything breaks down. It brings them out of themselves, into the streets."
"We could interview a few bystanders."
"OK. We can start with ourselves."
"I think it's a good day for a cook-in. The slush is getting up the legs of my pants and over my boot tops and, thence, on down."
"Better go barefoot."
A group—fairly large—of religious fanatics went by chanting that the end was passed and this, this was very paradise enow. All had their hair cut Iroquois style, a single bristling rib surrounded by waxed baldness.

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"I wouldn't care to appear so conspicuous. There's a white sale at Altman's."
Instead they took in the fruitessence counter at another large store. Clerks were squeezing atomizers at all who hove within range and yelling the brand names of their costly wares. On an upper floor they found an interesting exhibit of glass chairs and stuffed rugs.
"Do we have a charge here?"
An elderly woman assured them that to buy a room divider was pointless, the drivers of the delivery vans having walked out in sympathy with the transit strikers. "I wouldn't want to say *when* you'd receive *that*," she said and shook her head like a dice cup as she gave the offending article a good kick.
"Did you notice? She spoke in italics."
"Everyone does. That's what conversation is all about. Though it's mighty bad form in writing."
"*Yes*."
"Food."
"Is of the essence."
They addressed themselves to the store cafeteria and plates of broiled and flaming weenies.

53

"Few things are smarter than a black and white sunset. What with the snow, ermine, diamonds and soft coal soot."
"More like a copy of *The Times*, I'd say. One that the cat shat on."

54

From the diary, or Housekeeping Book.

Mon. Took wash to Wash-o-mat.
Tues. Picked up wash.
Wed. Found dry cleaners closed for inventory.
Thurs. Cleaners still closed. Fear they have absconded with the Shetland sweaters.
Fri. Hung around the house.

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Sat. Special ordered two pair golf shoes without cleats. Saw a film.
Sun. Went downtown to savor the quiet. Statue of Liberty looking very well in the rain.
Mon. Took wash to Wash-o-mat.
etcetera

55

They decided to look into psychotherapy, and having decided, proceeded to do so. Oh the books, the books!
And chats with a few practitioners, none of whom seemed interested in taking on a group limited to two. Until they came to a small Frenchman who took in the situation, if that's what it was, at a blink. In high and rapid tones he held forth on *folie à deux*. They were not uninterested. Until, born away on the wind of his oratory, he got onto *folie à trois*, which he seemed to think both a good idea and a feasible one. They slipped silently away, careful not to break the thread of his thought.

56

Food was of no great interest to either of them. Some fruit, choice vino, frozen fish cakes—things along those lines satisfied them. They preferred to spend their time doped—not always *utterly* doped: they had their subtleties—listening to their fabulous stereo. It took up a whole wall. And part of another. It was as sensitive as a ripe touch-me-not seed capsule. Touch. Split. Spurt. By great good fortune one of them was an engineer: a *graduate* engineer. That *was* fortunate. Their residence was not troubled by the comings and goings of costly so-called stereo fixers with long greasy hair.
Their taste in tapes and discs was catholic. They would buy anything, provided it fitted in with the current kick. The worst days were during their early recordings spell. The de Rezkes recorded under the stage of the Metropolitan. Like someone whistling for his dog during a cow stampede. Art. Yes, art was what they lived for, that, and their love. There, too, their taste was catholic. It included everything except the

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more refined forms of abstention. That, they did not practice. It might have seemed to some that theirs were empty days. Not to them, however, not to them by any means at all. Why only the day before they had gone to the International Flower Show, wearing concealed tape recorders. They collected the full flat flavor of flower show chat and added it to their holdings.
The flowers, they were wilted. Unspeakable the much admired ferny corner: dank smelly sod, a pool with a stone frog in it, a young weeping beech that wept with reason. Only some bromeliads, adhering to a rotting log, past muster. Alas, they were not for sale. Distinctly, the boat show was more fun. Yes, yes.

57

"Death is not quite like anything else."
"Wake up, dear, it's only you."
"Pushing daisies is a mug's game."
"Wake up, you're singing in your sleep."
"Will these bones live? Cowshit I know, asshole him."
"All right, I'll do that."
Shake, punch.
Growl, object.
"Let me sleep."
"You weren't letting me sleep."
"I thought you didn't care about sleep."
"Mostly I don't, but when I do, I care passionately."
"What did I say?"
"I've already forgotten."
"You might have fetched the cassette."
"Yes, I might have. But I didn't. Care for a snack? Fried eggs?"
"What time is it? In a general way."
"Noon—at a guess. Or midnight. One of the twelves."
"It's amazing how you keep your looks. We're both still personable men."
"Flattery won't butter any toast, and buttered toast is what I want."
Outside, people went about their business in the unseasonable

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weather. And not all their business was all that nice. Mugging was the least of it. If the grocer didn't know you there was small chance of his unlocking. Strangers could starve on the doorstep of their choice. A cloud-smeared sun beamed down on the filthy city and its rumbling traffic.
"Buttered toast with poached eggs on them, like bazooms."
"Fix yourself whatever you want. I'm going bye bye back to sleep."
"Crypt."
"Musk ox."

58

The white geranium of a cloud lost a few petals which drifted off on their own. The mother cloud did its foaming Niagara imitation. Clear on its southern flank was the profile of an Indian chief in full feather. It wasn't going to rain, and the breeze was balmy.
"Do you remember the opening night of Carnegie Hall, when Tchaikovsky conducted?"
"Vividly."
"What was your favorite record when you were thirteen?"
"Stokowski's *Afternoon of a Faun*."
"You still like that."
"I don't stop liking things: I just find more things to like."
"People?"
"Well... I've never *dis*liked people. I know that's not enough, but it's all I've got to give."
"What foods do you like best?"
"Lamb chops, peas and fresh fruit in season."
"Not winter raspberries?"
"I really don't care."
"You use the word 'really' a good deal. Isn't that a bit of a cliché?"
"Do you think what I say would be truer if I left it out?"
"No, not really."
"You see?"
"No, not really."

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59

They took a ride on the Reading. All the windows had been shot at or struck by stones (in most cases, the latter). There was neither heat nor food. The other passengers sat in stupefaction. As dark came, the lights flickered and went out. This made the patterns of shattering in the window glass clearer. It was nostalgic, riding a train. The conductors, who now and then announced an up-coming stop, had neither shame nor courtesy. Unless not hitting people or pushing and shoving them can be called courtesy. Perhaps it can.

The desolate landscape slid by, made cozy by small houses with lights on in them. The lighted rooms were kitchens at this time of day, where someone was preparing the evening meal for one or more persons who soon would be coming home. A surprising number of uncultivated fields sported dead automobiles and in a small woods a refrigerator lay rusting on its back, its door open to the elements. The wind rose and all sorts of trash went fluttering about, restless as birds feeding.

Speaking of feeding: they had brought a box lunch, which showed foresight. Tuna salad on white had never tasted better. Eventually the train reached its last stop. There, they rented a car for the trip back. Enough is as good as a feast, and they had had the train story.

60

They cut each other's hair, but not each other's nails.

61

They were invited to a gathering—and what is more, they went. A maid in a uniform collected wraps and shuffled them onto hangers. A youth in a tarboosh sloshed potent liquors into tumblers and filled with the mixer of the victim's choice. It was not a large room, though an attractive one, and a hundred guests created what could justly be called a babel. Since they never reciprocated invitations, it was with reason, if without manners, that a portly figure in shades of canary said, "Well, and what are you *two* doing here?"

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Easy to handle. One of them mouthed a reply, as though speaking a shade too softly, while the other firmly set down a brackish glass of rye and demanded club soda, with a twist. All about them discussion raged: the latest reading, the latest trattoria, the high cost of taxis, how to find an apartment, where to go in the winter and why not to go there, how to have fun, whether to step into the bedroom and join the heads. The quality of the lox was praised by all who partook of it.

The furor created a kind of silence through which, in magic manner, threaded a recording of the late Povla Frisjch—something of Grieg's which the artist caused to transcend itself. A vase of eucalyptus leaves was upset—the high point of the evening, just the slow slosh of water and the piercing voice of the lieder singer.

"It was not a beautiful voice," one was heard to say, "but she was tops."

A bit later, when a woman with foxy hair sought for our protagonists, she found them gone. They weren't much for parties. In fact, it was a miracle they were ever asked.

61

Then life—she is no lady and she sure is a button-lip—slipped them a Mickey.

They tripped.

They fell.

They crashed.

They went—or were sent—away. It took a long, long time, a very, very, very long time.

62

When they came out their therapists put their heads together and said they thought it wiser for them not to live together. So they rented lofts in the same building and opened an antique shop. They had never had friends so happily they did not have to drop any, on the grounds of bad influence. But frequenters of antique shops are a chatty crew, and they soon had a wide acquaintance—progressive bridge one night, and often a brunch on Sunday.

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They went in in a small way for what used to be called good works. One of them gave up one night a week to recording light novels for the blind. The other escorted wayward boys who had attained a status of trust at the Home on visits to the zoo, and such.

As they will, the years passed, and as it will, mortality made good its claim. First the one, then the other. They were interred side by side, and from beneath the green green grass of home one might have heard, as in a dream, their voices speak as one: "Dear reader! How we love you! (I think)."

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Ed Dorn

The Poet Lets His Tongue Hang Down

A one-question interview from Bean News

I would enquire of you
The Slinger leaning forward askt
One of the 4 Great Questions
Least troubling my mind since my arrival:

WHO ARE THE BARBARIANS?

As if in a space elapsed
between our sighting then hearing a jet
The Poet grew pale
and his blaring transistor fell
from his Ivory Fingers
  four of whom
  jumped off at the knuckles
  and ran off with all his rings
  and straightway sent notes
  to the six who stayed
  expressing contempt and dismay
And the temperature fell in his veins
and his mouth weakened
and grew slack
and his left eye left the track
and wandered about the landscape
unlocused and his tongue
fell out over his chin
and his nose migrated
even as Gondwana too gorged
on the immensities of time to be observed
so that its movement is proven
by the striations of its slippage
as they are the scars of the Earth
And his ears floated upward
as if Helium was all they heard

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and his feet come off and sped over the horizon
leaving even the wings of his ankles
  and his shoes filled with dust
  an instant ghost town complete
  with banging shutters and peeling posters
  of those of us wanted, dead or alive
Then his hair blew away
in a dust bowl condition
  like in the Grapes of Wrath
  and things what they were
  all the people of his barren scalp
  packed up and found their way to California
  around the craters of this once rich terrain,
And his brain snapped shut like a greasy spoon
when the last customer has et his chops
  then gone out the door wiping his chin
  with one hand while the other buys "The Times"
  which he reads standing on the corner
  toothpick in his mouth "Rams clobber Lions" in his eye
  and turns the pages to the comics where Rex Morgan
  is performing and can't be reached
  as his hand comes up from scratching his ass
  to catch the pages in the Michigan Winde
But the poet's Head was during this lapse
busy with alterations
and when the job was done
the bang of hammers
the whine of bandsaws gone
And all the baffling pulled off
his Head was a pyramid
the minimum solid

  And one of his eyes came home
trying to look like the trip had been a bore
when signs to the contrary were all over the floor
and he smiled
But the Eye on top of his pyramid
would say no more

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Charlie Vermont

my muse wears contact lenses,
maybe she'll never see
past suburbia
with its walled-in, half-acre privacy
and she eats too much
so her diaphragm is choking her
voice and breath

I'll have to get another

one who can see
the little white puffs of clouds
on the horizon a hundred miles away

one who can walk
to where the rainbow is
saddling the high mountain

one who can smell
autumn in the air and snow coming
and who knows, like a little child,
the different smells of
all the grownups' houses

one who can hear
the machinations of the evil one,
see the lone star of doom coming
and warn me
so I can make it to
the cluster stars of love
while there's still time

September 1, 1971
Placitas, New Mexico

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Jim Brodey

Unemployed Tunes

sun pressure on skylights

gone as revolving the world in such ecstasy

mental buzzings bugle into long hair

the vagrant bondage
the absorbent beercan haze of Mr Jasper Johns

magnetic broodings
density of black
where bargaining in
emptiness
one begins to unwrap
the quilted geraniums born to alien speech

Time where all bathed in Bong is holy:

the silver stranger

the prophecy rose of clouds in the doorway
of lights

this is Walt Whitman speaking

1964

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Poem

Back at San Francisco Greyhound, leaning
and I'm not thinking or yearning
I'm just leaning. Dreaming of hamburger
with everything. I've always wanted everything!
And this dull terminal wait makes me want
laserbeam duststreet. Poem in apothecary jars
& crumbled barber shop window. White button energy
to get myself out of drug-trousers,
like Mayakovsky into revolutionary clouds & off
citystreets, which are wet. Overhead, jet streams' vaportrail.
The Gate Fourteen departure air swarms against me
at vendor comb machine. My movie,
California Fold Out, has collapsed, is
on the cutting room floor.

The Terminal, to take a bus or eat a cheeseburger
DO YOU REMEMBER THAT DAY OF
INDEPENDENCE IN SPELLING?
Eb: A-minus. The membership of stickball nuts
idles at the lap of unfold, and telescope
looking through consciousness of picture-window
and verticle golf field. Transportation terrors
and wastebag sickhoods. Yes! this is the exploration
of one Adulthood! Poems met with mathematics
and Denver bus wrote this scribble of red farmhouse
flattened together ice melons, lunch counter,
the sky over Colorado like Norman Bluhm's "Dunkirk"
soaked with sponges crreeaaking twilight to evening.
the price of my poems is one hamburger!

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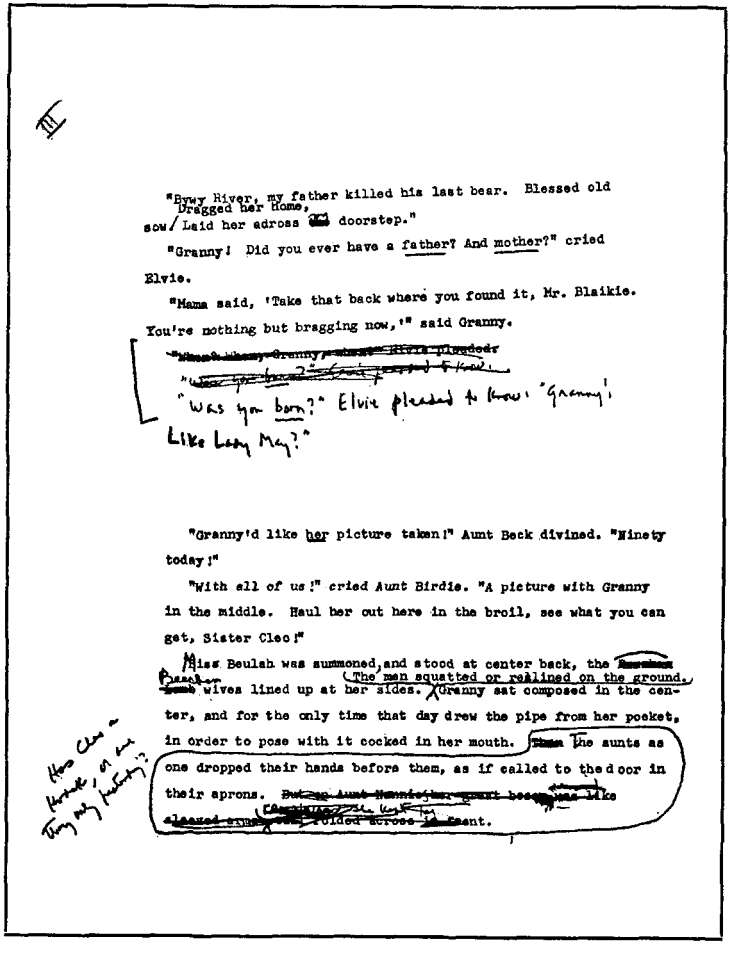

"Bywy River, my father killed his last bear. Blessed old sow / Dragged her home, Laid her across doorstep."

"Granny! Did you ever have a father? And mother?" cried Elvie.

"Mama said, 'Take that back where you found it, Mr. Blaikie. You're nothing but bragging now,'" said Granny.

"Was you born?" Elvie pleaded to know. "Granny! Like Lady May?"

"Granny'd like her picture taken!" Aunt Beck divined. "Ninety today!"

"With all of us!" cried Aunt Birdie. "A picture with Granny in the middle. Haul her out here in the broil, see what you can get, Sister Cleo!"

Miss Beulah was summoned, and stood at center back, the preacher wives lined up at her sides. The men squatted or reclined on the ground. Granny sat composed in the center, and for the only time that day drew the pipe from her pocket, in order to pose with it cocked in her mouth. The aunts as one dropped their hands before them, as if called to the door in their aprons.

Eudora Welty manuscript page

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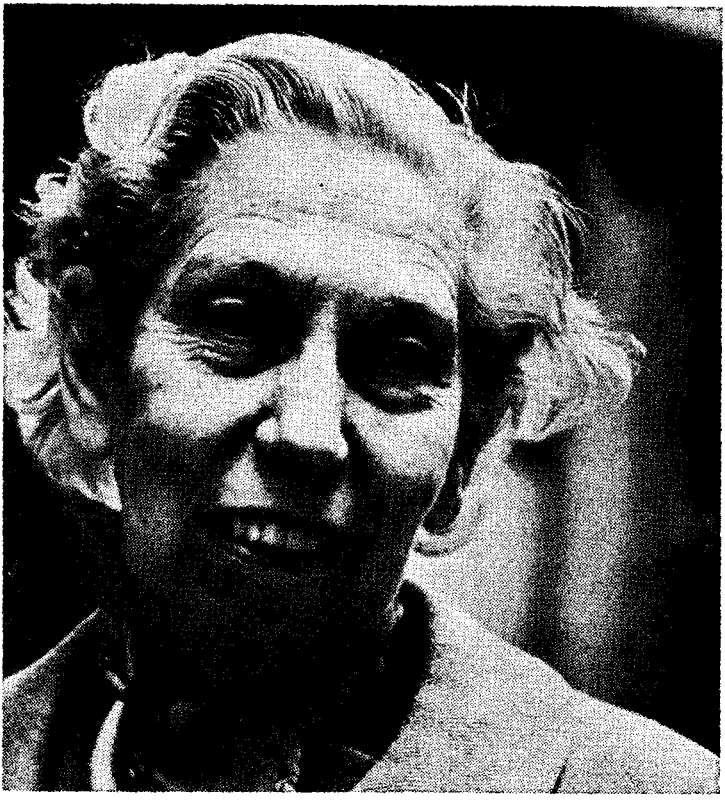
The Art of Fiction XLVII

Eudora Welty



Eudora Welty was born in 1909 in Jackson, Mississippi, where she has lived ever since, departing only for a rare visit to Europe, an annual trip to New York, an occasional reading at a college. During her brief stay in New York, we met in her room at the Algonquin Hotel, an hour or so after her train had arrived in Penn Station. She had given me the wrong room number, so I first saw her peering out of her door as the elevator opened. A tall, large-boned, grey-haired woman greeted me apologetically. She was ad-

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mittedly nervous about being interviewed, particularly on a tape recorder. After describing her train ride—she won't fly—she braced herself and asked if I wouldn't please begin the questioning.

Once the interview got underway, she grew more at ease. As she herself might say, she was not unforthcoming. *She speaks with a Deep Southern drawl, deliberately, measuring her words, listening, so it seems, to her own voice. She is extremely private, and won't answer anything personal about herself or about friends.*

Eudora Welty's work includes four collections of short stories —A Curtain of Green *(1941)*, The Wide Net *(1943)*, The Golden Apples *(1949)*, The Bride of the Innisfallen *(1955)*; *two novellas*—The Robber Bridegroom *(1942)*, The Ponder Heart *(1954)*; *three novels*—Delta Wedding *(1946)*, Losing Battles *(1970)*, The Optimist's Daughter *(1972)*; *a children's book*—The Shoe Bird *(1964)*; *and a book of photographs*—One Time, One Place *(1971)*.

INTERVIEWER

You wrote somewhere that we should still tolerate Jane Austen's kind of family novel. Is Austen a kindred spirit?

WELTY

Tolerate? I should just think so! I love and admire all she does, and profoundly, but I don't read her or anyone else for "kindredness." The piece you're referring to was written on assignment for *Brief Lives*, an anthology Louis Kronenberger was editing. He did offer me either Jane Austen or Chekhov, and Chekhov I do dare to think is more "kindred." I feel closer to him in spirit, but I couldn't read Russian, which I felt whoever wrote about him should be able to do. Chekhov is one of us—so close to today's world, to my mind, and very close to the South—which Stark Young pointed out, a long time ago.

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INTERVIEWER

Why is Chekhov close to today's South?

WELTY

He loved the singularity in people, the individuality. He took for granted the sense of family. He had the sense of fate overtaking a way of life, and his Russian humor seems to me kin to the humor of a Southerner. It's the kind that lies mostly in character. You know, in *Uncle Vanya* and *The Cherry Orchard*, how people are always gathered together and talking and talking, no one's really listening. Yet there's a great love and understanding that prevails through it, and a knowledge and acceptance of each other's idiosyncracies, a tolerance of them, and also an acute enjoyment of the dramatic. Like in *The Three Sisters*, when the fire is going on, how they talk right on through their exhaustion, and Vershinin says "I feel a strange excitement in the air," and laughs and sings and talks about the future. That kind of responsiveness to the world, to whatever happens, out of their own deeps of character seems very Southern to me. Anyway, I took a temperamental delight in Chekhov, and gradually the connection was borne in upon me.

INTERVIEWER

Do you ever return to Virginia Woolf?

WELTY

Yes. She was the one who opened the door. When I read *To the Lighthouse*, I felt, Heavens, *what is this?* I was so excited by the experience I couldn't sleep or eat. I've read it many times since, though more often these days I go back to her diary. Any day you open it to will be tragic, and yet all the marvelous things she says about her work, about working, leave you filled with joy that's stronger than your misery for her. Remember—"I'm not very far along, but I think I have my statues against the sky"? Isn't that beautiful?

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INTERVIEWER

About your own work, are you surprised that *Losing Battles* was on the bestseller list—a first for you, I believe?

WELTY

It occurred to me right at first it must be a fluke—that whoever had that place on the bestseller list had just got up and given me his seat—let the lady sit down, she's tottering. Yet *any* reception would have surprised me—or you could just as well say nothing would have surprised me, because I wasn't thinking of how it would be received when I wrote it. I thought about the opinion of a handful of friends I would love to have love that book, but not about the public.

INTERVIEWER

Do you write for your friends?

WELTY

At the time of writing, I don't write for my friends or myself either; I write for *it*, for the pleasure of *it*. I believe if I stopped to wonder what so-and-so would think, or what I'd feel like if this were read by a stranger, I would be paralyzed. I care what my friends think, very deeply—and it's only after they've read the finished thing that I really can rest, deep down. But in the writing, I have to just keep going straight through with only the *thing* in mind and what it dictates.

It's so much an inward thing that reading the proofs later can be a real shock. When I received them for my first book —no, I guess it was for *Delta Wedding*—I thought, *I* didn't write this. It was a page of dialogue—I might as well have never seen it before. I wrote to my editor, John Woodburn, and told him something had happened to that page in the typesetting. He was kind, not even surprised—maybe this happens to all writers. He called me up and read me from the manuscript—word for word what the proofs said. Proofs don't shock me any longer, yet there's still a strange moment with every book when I move from the position of writer to the position of reader, and I suddenly see my words with

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the eyes of the cold public. It gives me a terrible sense of exposure, as if I'd gotten sunburned.

INTERVIEWER

Do you make changes in galleys?

WELTY

I correct or change words, but I can't rewrite a scene or make a major change, because there's a sense then of someone looking over my shoulder. It's necessary, anyway, to trust that moment when you were sure at last you had done all you could, done your best for that time. When it's finally in print, you're delivered—you don't ever have to look at it again. It's too late to worry about its failings. I'll have to apply any lessons this book has taught me toward writing the next one.

INTERVIEWER

Is *Losing Battles* a departure from your previous fiction?

WELTY

I wanted to see if I could do something that was new for me: translating every thought and feeling into action and speech, speech being another form of action—to bring the whole life of it off through the completed gesture, so to speak. I felt that I'd been writing too much by way of description, of introspection on the part of my characters. I tried to see if I could make everything shown, brought forth, without benefit of the author's telling any more about what was going on inside the characters' minds and hearts. For me, this makes almost certainly for comedy—which I love to write best of all. Now I see it might be a transition toward writing a play.

INTERVIEWER

Did you know what you were going to write before you put it on paper?

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WELTY

Yes, it was there in my head, but events proliferated as I went along. For instance, I thought all the action in the novel would be contained in one day and night, but a folder started to fill up with things marked "Next A.M." I didn't foresee the stories that grew out of the stories—that was one of the joys of working the novel out. I thought the book would be short, and instead it was three or four times longer than my normal work. There's no way of estimating its original length, because I had great chunks of things in paper clips which weren't numbered until they went to the printer. And I must have thrown away at least as much as I kept in the book.

INTERVIEWER

Did you learn anything new about writing dialogue?

WELTY

I believe so. In its beginning, dialogue's the easiest thing in the world to write when you have a good ear, which I think I have. But as it goes on, it's the most difficult, because it has so many ways to function. Sometimes I needed to make a speech do three or four or five things at once—reveal what the character said but also what he thought he said, what he hid, what others were going to think he meant, and what they misunderstood, and so forth—all in his single speech. And the speech would have to keep the essence of this one character, his whole particular outlook in concentrated form. This isn't to say I succeeded. But I guess it explains why dialogue gives me my greatest pleasure in writing. I used to laugh out loud sometimes when I wrote it—the way P. G. Wodehouse is said to do. I'd think of some things my characters would say and even if I couldn't use it, I would write the scene out just to let them loose on something—my private show.

INTERVIEWER

Where does the dialogue come from?

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WELTY

Familiarity. Memory of the way things get said. Once you have heard certain expressions, sentences, you almost never forget them. It's like sending a bucket down the well and it always comes up full. You don't know you've remembered, but you have. And you listen for the right word, in the present, and you hear it. Once you're into a story everything seems to apply—what you overhear on a city bus is exactly what your character would say on the page you're writing. Wherever you go, you meet part of your story. I guess you're tuned in for it, and the right things are sort of magnetized—if you can think of your ears as magnets. I could hear someone saying—and I had to cut this out—"What, you never ate goat?" And someone answering, "Goat! Please don't say you serve *goat* at this reunion. I wasn't told it was *goat* I was served. I thought—" and so on, and then the recipe, and then it ended up with—I can't remember exactly now—it ended with, "You can do a whole lot of things with vinegar." Well, all these things I would just laugh about and think about for so long and put them in. And then I'd think, that's just plain indulgence. Take it out! And I'd take it out.

INTERVIEWER

Are you an eavesdropper?

WELTY

I'm not as much as I used to be, or would like to be, because I don't hear as well as I used to, or there's too much other noise everywhere. But I've heard some wonderful remarks. Well, in the South, everybody stays busy talking all the time—they're not sorry for you to overhear their tales. I don't feel in helping myself I ever did anything underhanded. I was *helping out.*

INTERVIEWER

Do you think this oral tradition, so to speak, accounts for your vigorous use of dialogue?

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WELTY

I think it accounts for the pleasure people take in a story told. It's a treasure I helped myself to. I took it for my ways and means, and that's proper and justified: our people talk that way. They learn and teach and think and enjoy that way. Southerners do have, they've inherited, a narrative sense of human destiny. This may or may not come out in *Losing Battles*. A reunion is everybody remembering together—remembering and relating when their people were born and what happened in their lives, what that made happen to their children, and how it was that they died. There's someone to remember a man's whole life, every bit of the way along. I think that's a marvelous thing, and I'm glad I got to know something of it. In New York you may have the greatest and most congenial friends, but it's extraordinary if you ever know anything about them except that little wedge of their life that you meet with the little wedge of your life. You don't get that sense of a continuous narrative line. You never see the full circle. But in the South, where people don't move about as much, even now, and where they once hardly ever moved away at all, the pattern of life was always right there.

INTERVIEWER

Would you say that Southerners—Deep Southerners—are more open than Northerners?

WELTY

I think we have a sort of language we all understand and speak—a shorthand of some kind, based on familiarity—but I'm not sure we're more open. We may not tell as much as we think we do, and we may not hide as much as we think we do. We're just more used to talking—as you can see—and the subject doesn't especially cut us down.

INTERVIEWER

And that profoundly affects your fiction?

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WELTY

I think that's what gives a pattern to it, and a sense of its shape to me. I do want to say that I'm only speaking for myself when I speak of Southern qualities, because I don't know how other people work. It may be entirely different, especially with a genius like William Faulkner, who had such a comprehensive sense of the whole deep, deep past, and more far-reaching, bred-in country knowledge than I have, which is so valuable, besides all the rest of his equipment that I don't need to tell you about.

INTERVIEWER

Did you know Faulkner?

WELTY

Slightly and over a long period of time, but not well. I liked him ever so much. We met at a dinner party in Oxford, just old friends of his and old friends of mine, which was the right way for it to happen, and it was just grand. We sang hymns, and we sang some old ballads—and the next day he invited me to go sailing. If we ever met in New York, we just talked about being in Oxford. *He* didn't bring up writing, and if he didn't, you know *I* wasn't going to bring it up! But when he was working in Hollywood, he once wrote me a two-line letter—this was long before we met—and told me he liked a little book of mine called *The Robber Bridegroom*, and said would I let him know if he could ever do anything for me. It was on a little piece of notebook paper, written in that fine, neat, sort of unreadable hand, in pencil—and I've lost it.

INTERVIEWER

Did you feel at all influenced by his presence?

WELTY

I don't honestly think so. It is hard to be sure about such things. I was naturally in the deepest awe and reverence of him. But that's no help in your own writing. Nobody can help you but yourself. So often I'm asked how I could have

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written a word with William Faulkner living in Mississippi, and this question amazes me. It was like living near a big mountain, something majestic—it made me happy to know it was there, all that work of his life. But it wasn't a helping or hindering presence. Its magnitude, all by itself, made it something remote in my own working life. When I thought of Faulkner it was when I *read.*

On the other hand, he didn't seem remote to everybody in being our great writer. I know a story about him, though he never knew anybody knew of it, I'd bet. Mississippi is full of writers, and I heard this from the person it was told to. A lady had decided she'd write a novel and got along fine till she came to the love scene. "So," she told my friend, "I thought, there's William Faulkner, sitting right up there in Oxford. Why not send it to William Faulkner and ask him?" So she sent it to him and time went by and she didn't ever hear from him, and so she called him up. Because there he was. She said, "Mr. Faulkner, did you ever get that love scene I sent you?" He said yes, he had got it. And she said, "Well, what did you think of it?" And he said, "Well, honey, it's not the way I'd do it—but you go *right ahead.*" Now, wasn't that gentle of him?

INTERVIEWER

Do people give you unpublished manuscripts to read? I mean, women especially tend to write voluminous historical novels, and I wonder if any of them are in Jackson.

WELTY

I wouldn't be surprised. I don't think there's any neck of the woods they're not in. Yes, I get sent manuscripts, but those historical and Gothic novels are really a subject on which I know nothing, and I say so. There is, in point of fact, a good deal of writing talent in general around our state now—a lot of good young ones, serious ones.

INTERVIEWER

Did you ever feel part of a literary community, along with

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people like Flannery O'Connor, Carson McCullers, Katherine Anne Porter or Caroline Gordon?

WELTY

I'm not sure there's any dotted line connecting us up, though all of us knew about each other and all of us, I think, respected and read each other's work and understood it. And some of us are friends of long standing. I don't think there was any passing about of influences, but there's a lot of pleasure in thinking in whose lifetimes your own lifetime has happened to come along. Of course, Katherine Anne Porter was wonderfully generous to me from the beginning. At the time I began sending my first stories to *The Southern Review*, she read them and wrote to me from Baton Rouge inviting me to come down to see her. It took me, I suppose, six months or a year to fully get up my nerve. Twice I got as far as Natchez and turned around and came back. But I finally did get there, and Katherine Anne couldn't have been more welcoming. Later on, she wrote the introduction to my first book of stories, and I owe her very much for that. We've been friends all these years.

INTERVIEWER

How would you feel about a biography about yourself?

WELTY

Shy, and discouraged at the very thought, because to me a writer's work should be everything. A writer's whole feeling, the force of his whole life, can go into a story—but what he's worked for is to get an objective piece down on paper. That should be read instead of some account of his life, with that understanding—here is something which now exists and was made by the hands of this person. Read it for what it is. It doesn't even matter too much whose hands they were. Well, of course, it does—I was just exaggerating to prove my point. But your private life should be kept private. My own I don't think would particularly interest anybody, for that matter. But I'd guard it; I feel strongly about that. They'd

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have a hard time trying to find something about me. I think I'd better burn everything up. It's best to burn letters, but at least I've never kept diaries or journals. All my manuscripts I've given to the Department of Archives and History in Jackson as they came out because that's my hometown and the director is a lifelong friend. But I don't give them everything. I must have a trunk full of stuff that I didn't give because I didn't think it was anybody's else's concern, or that anybody would even care to see my mistakes and false turns. Like about eating goat and all the million things that I left out.

INTERVIEWER

Why do *Losing Battles* and *Delta Wedding* take place back in the 1920s and 1930s?

WELTY

It was a matter of setting the stage and confining the story. These are both family stories, and I didn't want them inhibited by outward events I couldn't control. In the case of *Delta Wedding*, I remember I made a careful investigation to find the year in which nothing very terrible had happened in the Delta by way of floods or fires or wars which would have taken the men away. I settled it by the almanac. It was a little inconvenient for me, because I myself was only a little girl during the era I was writing about—that's why I let a little girl be the observer of part of it. In the case of *Losing Battles*, I wanted to write about a family who had *nothing*. A bare stage. I chose the time that was the very hardest, when people had the least and the stage could be the barest—and that was the Depression, of course.

INTERVIEWER

Do you prefer working with a bare stage?

WELTY

In this case, it was in order to overcrowd it with people. I start with ideas about character and situation, and the technique grows out of these as I grow into the work. It's

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different, of course, for every story. In *Losing Battles* I wanted to write about people who had nothing at all and yet had all the resources of their own character and situation to do what they could about their lives.

INTERVIEWER

Were you familiar with plantation life when you wrote *Delta Wedding?*

WELTY

No, but I had some friends who came from there and I used to hear their stories, and I'd be taken on picnics and visits there. Family visits. The Delta is very rich and visually striking, but completely flat. I would find it maddening after days with nothing but the horizon. Just before you reach it there are high bluffs, and to get in you plunge down a deep hill and from then on there's nothing but flatness. Some of the things I saw and heard began to stick. Some family tales and sayings are right in the book, though by now I can't remember which are true and which are made up.

INTERVIEWER

John Crowe Ransom wrote in a review that *Delta Wedding* might well be "one of the last novels in the tradition of the Old South."

WELTY

I revere Mr. Ransom, but his meaning here is not quite clear to me. I wasn't trying to write a novel of the Old South. I don't think of myself as writing out of any special tradition, and I'd hesitate to accept that sanction for *Delta Wedding*. I'd hesitate still more today, because the term itself, "Old South," has a connotation of something unreal and not quite straightforward.

INTERVIEWER

Your parents weren't from the Deep South originally. Do you think that contributed to your ironic perspective?

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WELTY

It may have given me balance. But other factors mattered more. My father's father owned a farm in Southern Ohio, and my mother's father was a country lawyer and farmer in West Virginia, and both my mother's parents came from Virginia families made up mostly of teachers and preachers. Some of these wrote for newspapers or kept journals, though none wrote fiction. But the family influence I felt came from the important fact that they all loved to read and that I was brought up with books. Yet my parents would have been the people they were, people of character, no matter where they were from, and I would have been their child wherever I was born. I'm a native Southerner, but as a writer I think background matters most in how well it teaches you to look around and see clearly what's there, and in how deeply it nourishes your imagination.

INTERVIEWER

"Where is the Voice Coming From?" is about the Medgar Evers assassination and must be your only topical story.

WELTY

I'm certain it is. It pushed up through something else I was working on. I had been having a feeling of uneasiness over the things being written about the South at that time, because most of them were done in other parts of the country and I thought most were synthetic. They were perfectly well-intentioned stories but generalities written from a distance to illustrate generalities. When that murder was committed, it suddenly crossed my consciousness that I knew what was in that man's mind because I'd lived all my life where it happened. It was the strangest feeling of horror and compulsion all in one. I tried to write from the interior of my own South and that's why I dared to put it in the first person. The title isn't very good, I'd like to get a better one. At the time I wrote it—it was overnight—no one knew who the murderer was, and I just meant by the title that whoever was speaking, I—the writer—knew, was in a position to know, what the murderer must be saying and why.

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INTERVIEWER

Do real events hinder you in writing?

WELTY

Well, if you write about an actual event, you can't shape it the way you can an imaginary one. In "The Voice" I was writing about the real thing, and at the point of its happening. I was like a real-life detective trying to discover who did it. I don't mean the name of the murderer, but his *nature*. That's not really a short-story writer's prerogative, or is it? Anyway, as events went to prove, I think I came close to pinpointing the mind, but I went a bit wide of the mark in placing the social background of the person arrested for it. As a friend of mine said, "You thought it was a Snopes and it was a Compson." However, in some ways, that isn't a very lasting distinction any more.

INTERVIEWER

Do you see a difference between your early stories in *A Curtain of Green* and *The Wide Net* where you deal more with the grotesque and grim than you do in *The Bride of the Innisfallen?*

WELTY

It's a difference not really in subject matter so much as in the ways I approached it. In those early stories I'm sure I needed the device of what you call the "grotesque." That is, I hoped to differentiate characters by their physical qualities as a way of showing what they were like inside—it seemed to me then the most direct way to do it. This is an afterthought, though. I don't suppose I did it as consciously as all that, and I didn't know it was the easiest way. But it is easier to show somebody as lonely if you make him deaf and dumb than if you go feeling your way into his mind. And there was another reason for making the boy in "First Love" a deaf character: one of the other characters—Aaron Burr—was a real person. I couldn't invent conversation for him as I could for an imaginary character, so I had him speak in front of a deaf boy who could report and interpret him in his own

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way—that is, to suit the story. It's instinctive for a writer to show acute feeling or intense states of emotion by translating it into something visible—red hair, if nothing else. But it's not necessary. I believe I'm writing about the same inward things now without resorting to such obvious devices. But all devices—and the use of symbols is another—must come about organically, out of the story. I feel emphatic about that.

INTERVIEWER

Are you also talking here about other early stories like "Lily Daw and the Three Ladies" and "Petrified Man"?

WELTY

Well, when I wrote my first stories, I wrote much faster and it failed to occur to me that I could write them any other way, and perhaps better the second time. They show all the weaknesses of the headlong. I never rewrote, I just wrote. The plots in these stories are weak because I didn't know enough to worry about plots. In the dialogue stories, they came into being exactly as the dialogue led them along. I didn't realize their real weakness until I began reading stories in public—and my ear told me. They could have been made stronger so easily. Sometimes I fixed them up a little for my readings—cut, transposed—small things, just to see the difference.

INTERVIEWER

What inspired "Powerhouse"?

WELTY

I wrote it in one night after I'd been to a concert and dance in Jackson where Fats Waller played. I tried to write my idea of the life of the traveling artist and performer—not Fats Waller himself, but any artist—in the alien world, and tried to put it in the words and plot suggested by the music I'd been listening to. It was a daring attempt for a writer like me—as daring as it was to write about the murderer of Medgar Evers on *that* night—and I'm not qualified to write

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about music or performers. But trying it pleased me then and it still does please me.

INTERVIEWER

Are there problems with ending a story?

WELTY

Not so far, but I could have made mistakes without knowing it yet. It's really part of plotting to know the exact moment you're through. I go by my ear, and this may trick me. When I read, I hear what's on the page. I don't know whose voice it is, but some voice is reading to me, and when I write my own stories I hear it too. I have a visual mind, and I *see* everything I write, but I have to hear the words when they're put down. Oh, that sounds absurd. This is not the same as working with dialogue, which of course is another, specialized, kind of hearing.

INTERVIEWER

Your first stories were about Paris.

WELTY

It's not worth remembering. That was when I was a college freshman, sixteen years old. Oh, you know, I was writing about the great world, of which I only knew Jackson, Mississippi. But part of it stemmed from my sense of mystery in people and places, and that's legitimate and lifelong. As for Paris, I remember a sentence I opened one story with, to show you how bad I was: "Monsieur Boule inserted a delicate dagger in Mademoiselle's left side and departed with a poised immediacy." I like to think I didn't take myself seriously then, but I did.

INTERVIEWER

When you sent out "Death of a Traveling Salesman," how did you know you had ended your apprenticeship?

WELTY

I was just beginning it! I was thrilled to find that out. I

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hadn't conceived of a story's actually being taken. A boy up the street, an old friend, Hubert Creekmore, who's dead now, knew all about sending stories out. He was a writer who started before I did and published many good novels and poems. I wouldn't let him read anything I wrote but just asked him, "Hubert, do you know where I can send this?"—and he said to John Rood of *Manuscript*. So I sent it off and John Rood took it, and of course I was flabbergasted. So was Hubert! I believe I've always been lucky—my work has always landed safely and among friends.

INTERVIEWER

You were lucky to escape the novel-first requirement that publishers seem to impose upon young writers. They're wary of short story collections.

WELTY

I owe that to John Woodburn, my first editor, who was then at Doubleday, and to Diarmuid Russell, my agent and friend of many years now. I owe it to my nature, too, because I never wrote anything that didn't spring naturally to mind and engage my imagination.

INTERVIEWER

Compared to your stories, I see your novels as looser, freer, happier works which enjoy reconciliations and a final sense of communion.

WELTY

My natural temperament is one of positive feelings, and I really do work for resolution in a story. I don't think we often see life resolving itself, not in any sort of perfect way, but I like the fiction writer's feeling of being able to confront an experience and resolve it as art, however imperfectly and briefly—to give it a form and try to embody it—to hold it and express it in a story's terms. You have more chance to try it in a novel. A short story is confined to one mood, to which everything in the story pertains. Characters, setting,

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time, events, are all subject to the mood. And you can try more ephemeral, more fleeting things in a story—you can work more by suggestion—than in a novel. Less is resolved, more is suggested, perhaps.

INTERVIEWER

You reserve the short story for the ephemeral and the novel for the resolution?

WELTY

I can only say such things after the fact. If I'd known I was going to finish *Losing Battles* as a long novel, I don't know that I'd have begun it. I'm a short-story writer who writes novels the hard way, and by accident. You see, all my work grows out of the work itself. It seems to set its form from the idea which is complete from the start, and a sense of the form is like a vase into which you pour something and fill it up. I have that completely in mind from the beginning and I don't realize how far I can wander and yet come back. The flexibility and freedom are exciting to me, not being used to them, and they are hard to come by. But no one could have enjoyed more learning those lessons than I did. There's no end to what can be tried, is there? So better luck next time.

INTERVIEWER

Do you think critics have made too much of you as a regional writer, taking off from your own essays on the subject?

WELTY

I don't mind being called a regional writer. It's the critic's job to place and judge. But the critic can't really have a say in what a writer chooses to write about—that's the writer's lone responsibility. I just think of myself as writing about human beings and I happen to live in a region, as do we all, so I write about what I know—it's the same case for any writer living anywhere. I also happen to love my particular region. If this shows, I don't mind.

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INTERVIEWER

Is place your source of inspiration?

WELTY

Not only that, it's my source of knowledge. It tells me the important things. It steers me and keeps me going straight, because place is a definer and a confiner of what I'm doing. It helps me to identify, to recognize and explain. It does so much for you of itself. It saves me. Why, you couldn't write a story that happened nowhere. *I* couldn't, anyway. I couldn't write anything that abstract. I wouldn't be interested in anything that abstract.

INTERVIEWER

How about the function of place in "No Place for You, My Love"?

WELTY

That story is the one that place did the most for. It really wrote the story. I saw that setting only one time—the Delta of the Mississippi River itself, down below New Orleans where it winds toward the Gulf—one time only. Which smote me. It started the story and made it for me—and *was* the story, really. At its very least, place is essential, though. Time and place make the framework that any story's built on. To my mind, a fiction writer's honesty begins right there, in being true to those two facts of time and place. From there, imagination can take him anywhere at all.

You can equally well be true, I feel, to an *impression* of place. A new place seen in a flash may have an impact almost as strong as the place you've grown up in, one you're familiar with down to the bone, and know what it's like without having to think. I've written about place from either one extreme or the other, but not from partial familiarity or guessing—there's no solidity there.

INTERVIEWER

"Music from Spain" takes place in San Francisco.

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WELTY

That's using impression of place. I was in San Francisco for only three or four months—that's seeing it in a flash. That story was all a response to a place, an act of love at first sight. It's written from the point of view of the stranger, of course—the only way to write about a strange place. On the other hand, I couldn't write a story laid in New York, where I've come so many times—because it's both familiar and unfamiliar, a no man's land.

INTERVIEWER

Where is Morgana, in *The Golden Apples?*

WELTY

It's a made-up Delta town. I was drawn to the name because I always loved the conception of *Fata Morgana*—the illusory shape, the mirage that comes over the sea. All Delta places have names after people, so its was suitable to call it Morgana after some Morgans. My population might not have known there was such a thing as *Fata Morgana*, but illusions weren't unknown to them, all the same—coming in over the cottonfields.

INTERVIEWER

Do you see a similarity between Miss Eckhart in *The Golden Apples* and Julia Mortimer in *Losing Battles*, both being schoolteachers who were civilizing agents and therefore outsiders?

WELTY

It doesn't have to be "therefore"—though mine were indeed outsiders. I suppose they are kin, but teachers like those are all over the South and maybe everywhere else too—dedicated, and losing their battles, but not losing them every time. I went all through grammar school in Jackson under a principal all of us who went there still remember and talk about—Miss Lorena Duling. This isn't to say I based my character on her, but she gave me insight into what it meant

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to be a great teacher. And so was my mother one. All her teaching was done by the time I came along, but she told me stories about it. She taught in the little mountain schools in West Virginia, riding to her school on horseback and crossing the river in a boat, teaching children older than she was—she started at fifteen. I think it was my mother who made seventeen silver dollars the first month she taught, and after that they never could quite come up to that high a standard—which also happened to Miss Julia Mortimer. The shaping influence of teachers like that stays real for a lifetime.

INTERVIEWER

I see another group of characters forming a pattern in your work. Virgie Rainey, in *The Golden Apples*, is an individualist and outsider and similar in that respect to Robbie Reid of *Delta Wedding* and Gloria Short of *Losing Battles*.

WELTY

In looking back I can see the pattern. It's funny—when I'm writing I never see a repeat I make in large or small degree. I learn about it later. In Jackson they were recently doing a play of *The Ponder Heart* when I had just finished writing *Losing Battles*. The new novel was so fresh in my mind, whereas I hadn't thought of *The Ponder Heart* for years. But when I sat in at rehearsals, I kept seeing bits and pieces come up that I thought I had invented for *Losing Battles*, and there they were in another version in *Ponder Heart*. So I thought, it's sort of dismaying, but there it is. Your mind works that way. Yet they occur to me as new every time.

INTERVIEWER

Do you write when you're away from home?

WELTY

I've found it possible to write almost anywhere I've happened to try. I like it at home better because it's much more convenient for an early riser, which I am. And it's the only place where you can really promise yourself time and keep

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out interruptions. My ideal way to write a short story is to write the whole first draft through in one sitting, then work as long as it takes on revisions, and then write the final version all in one, so that in the end the whole thing amounts to one long sustained effort. That's not possible anywhere, but it comes nearest to being possible in your own home.

INTERVIEWER

Do you typewrite?

WELTY

Yes, and that's useful—it helps give me the feeling of making my work objective. I can correct better if I see it in typescript. After that, I revise with scissors and pins. Pasting is too slow and you can't undo it, but with pins you can move things from anywhere to anywhere, and that's what I really love doing—putting things in their best and proper place, revealing things at the time when they matter most. Often I shift things from the very beginning to the very end. Small things—one fact, one word—but things important to me. It's possible I have a reverse mind, and do things backwards, being a broken left-hander. Just so I've caught on to my weakness.

INTERVIEWER

You rewrite considerably?

WELTY

Yes, I do. Some things I let alone from first to last—the kernel of the story. You know enough not to touch something if it's right. The hardest thing for me is getting people in and out of rooms—the mechanics of a story. A simple act of putting on clothes is almost impossible for me to describe without many false starts. You have to be quick and specific in conveying that sort of action or fact, and also as neat and quiet about it as possible so that it doesn't obtrude. And I find that very challenging, especially to describe an action that I don't do very well myself, like sewing. I made Aunt

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Lexie in *Losing Battles* a poor sewer so that I wouldn't have to describe it too well. The easiest things to write about are emotions.

INTERVIEWER

And yet, the most difficult thing would seem to be the hidden reaches of the human heart, the mystery, those impalpable emotions.

WELTY

For a writer, those things are what you start with. You wouldn't have started a story without that awareness—that's what made you begin. That's what makes a character, projects the plot. Because you write from the inside. You can't start with how people look and speak and behave and come to know how they feel. You must know exactly what's in their hearts and minds before they ever set visible foot on the stage. You must know all, then not tell it all, or not tell too much at once: simply the right thing at the right moment. And the same character would be written about entirely differently in a novel as opposed to a short story. In a story you don't go into a character in order to develop him. He was born full grown and he's present there to perform his part in the story. He's subservient to his function, and he doesn't exist outside it. But in a novel, he may. So you may have to allow for his growth, and maybe hold him down and not tell everything you know or else let him have his full sway—make room for a hero, even, in more spacious premises.

INTERVIEWER

Can you talk objectively about your language, perhaps about your use of metaphor?

WELTY

I don't know how to because I think of the actual writing as having existence only in the story. When I think of something I put it into a narrative form, not in analytical form, and so anything I say would be artificial. Which reminds me

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of an Armenian friend of mine, an artist, who told me that his dreams all happened in the same place. When he went to bed he'd imagine himself on a sled going down a steep hill; at the foot of the hill was a little town and by the time he reached it he was asleep and his dreams happened right there. He didn't know why or how. And to go to the ridiculous and yet the sublime, there's W. C. Fields, who read an analysis of how he juggled. He couldn't juggle for six years afterwards. He'd never known that was how it was done. He'd just thrown up the balls and juggled.

LINDA KUEHL

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Michael McClure

Written After Finding a Dolphin Skull on the Gulf of California

YEAH, OR MAYBE LIVE IN FANTASIES
WITHIN A DOLPHIN'S SKULL!
I
can
hold
it in my hand!
I can look in through
the foramen magnum. SEE
the huge chamber where
the lovely creature lived
(in part at least—where
information organized).
SEE THE BLOWHOLES WHERE THE BREATH
passed through and made
a faint cloud above warm
waves.
OR
IT
IS
POSSIBLE
to
cast
around
the Pleistocene
and see real mammal creatures
in the last nooks and crannies. THE EXPLOSION
IS ALREADY HAPPENING! WE ARE IN THE MIDDLE
of it! It is different! It is not a flare
in three seconds that envelopes all

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and leaves cinders. It expands
exponentially—in the use
of energy. And we
can't see it. BUT
LIFE
IS
BEING ROLLED
BACK WITH A ROAR
and it is best to think the war
IS LOST
and we are survivors
of the Future.

OUR EYES AND EARS AND NOSE ARE DOTS
of intelligence!

FOR, IN TRUTH, WE ARE ELVES AND FAIRIES
leaving luminous trails in air like
antlered giraffes,
hairy mammoths,
ground sloths,
giant lemurs, otters, shrews, mice,
cloud tigers, dermoptera, the shí,
badger people dancing with the coyotes,
fox spirits, star-nosed moles, giant pandas...

ALL!
ALL! ALL
BRIGHT AND REAL
hovering over scented beds,
locked in meatly pleasure:

ONCE!

EVER!

NOW!

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IT IS ALL THE SAME!

At precious moments!

WHEN WE ARE THREE D SCREENS OF ACTUALITY

adrift in actuality—adrift and living.

Loving being real and free...

Lit like flying turquoises driving through the flesh
of time

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From *The Book of Joanna*

JOANNA, YOU'RE BLACK! YES, YOU'RE ROMANCE!
I won't pat your arm again BUT
I'll remember all the pain
and beauty
that we've known together.
How your body is a little girl's
FACE
WITH
WRINKLES
that
I've
grown with—and I love.
And yes, they're sexual—
as you are and
you know.
Sure
we've ripped at each other.
We've invented ugly little Hells.
(Though I'd rather be in one with you
than in heaven with another.)
And we've made some heavens too, like wafting
feathers in the pillow of the air beside
the fire—or on a balcony in Paris—
or a sportscar in the desert underneath the moon
—or swimming in an icy ocean like we come together.
AND
I'VE
HEARD
YOU SHOUT
SO OFTEN
with sexuality
in full pleasure!!!

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(Do you remember? Sure
getting old is getting
old. WE'VE
GOT
FAR
TO
GO

and you're still so BLACK.

I love your toes and breasts

and butt and shoulders

and your winsome smile and all

the trails and veils of romance floating from you

when you walk.

FOR
YOU
ARE
MY
QUEEN
OF PLEASURE
AND

if there's darkness in me
then your demon reflects it back

TO SOMETIMES MAKE AN ANGEL

and sometimes make a blessing in the guise

of fangy wolf

FOR

only you

can sometimes

let me know SHEER LOVELINESS

and only I can be your dark and fumbling guide

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The Second Leg

Walter Abish

I

Ludmilla is wearing a purple dress which leaves most of her back exposed. I trace the letters L...O...V...E... on her back, but she fails to respond. She's not to be trifled with. Love, I ruminate, has become altogether dispensable. I broach her first meeting with Victor.

You were by yourself?

No, I was with Frank.

Ludmilla finds it difficult to believe that I have never been to Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia or North Africa. Then how do you explain your inveterate fascination with Mosques, she asks. I have every confidence in my capability to avoid becoming senselessly embroiled with Ludmilla over such a trifling matter. I don't deny that Ludmilla has her life cut out for her. Mosques, however, are strictly part of my turf.

Ludmilla's distinctive turf is insidious sex. Invariably she discusses the pulsebeating tribulations of each horrifying encounter with her secretary, or one of the young assistants at the Museum. They customarily listen with bated breath while Ludmilla describes her reactions, her indescribable multitudi-

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nous responses to the abrupt, crude, lascivious, blunt and obscene proposals made to her in taxis, in subways, on escalators, in grounded elevators, and in a dentist's chair. One man insisted on tying her hands to the chandelier...

Breakfast
Breakfast
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Breakfast

Breakfast takes forever: I point to a stain on her Bonwit Teller dress. Hastily she leaves the table. I can hear the water running in the bathroom as she rinses it with soap and water. Now it is one hour since she's left the table. I have only myself to blame for pointing out the stain... I cling to the reassuring sound of running water. There's much I can do to pass the time. For one thing, I plan my day in the city... In ten more days I'll return to Paris. My worst fears are confirmed when I reach the bathroom door. It is locked from the inside. I rattle the doorknob... I tap on the door... I overcome my timidity and call her name. I think I can hear voices. They are calmly discussing me. They have my measurement, all right. But what are they doing while discussing me. I am to blame for pushing her into this. I should have known that Victor would be lying in wait for her. All those courses in psychology have not prepared me for a locked door. I debate whether to force it open. It might only be jammed... Logic 1. and 2. has not helped me achieve a measure of tranquility. I return to the dining room. I nibble at a half-eaten toast. I plan the next day, and the day after the next. Ludmilla couldn't remove the stain, so she had to wash the dress... and with one thing leading to another, she then washed her hair. With her head submerged under water, she couldn't hear me... Now she runs past me into the bedroom to change into dry clothes. She is not wearing the dress. She has, instead, wrapped a large towel around herself. I dare not approach the bathroom for fear of what I might discover. She has no time to put on her

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make-up. She leaves in a hurry. My inability to love has downright unsettled me. I can hardly pursue the most trivial task without being dejected. Love has embraced me to its bosom, pinioned me against the wall, and with an earth shattering and resounding crash, hurtled me skywards against the light grey ceiling of the bedroom. Love has rejected all my claustrophobic demands.

Victor does not wish to offend me. He remains closeted in the bathroom until his hair has dried. I accept his matter-of-fact explanation that he suffers from a nervous stomach.

2

I musn't overreach myself. After an absence of four years, I return to New York without any apprehension that I might encounter my former wife. I saw her last week, said Ludmilla, when she and Victor met me at the airport, and then dropped the bombshell that she had offered to redecorate Alicia's house... It needs a new lease on life, she said maliciously. I content myself with listing the recent changes in my personality. For one thing, I'm no longer suspicious. No longer suspicious. Last night I dreamt of fleshy angels...that rules out Ludmilla. All the same she continues to dominate me and set the pace. I put it down to her singular lack of forbearance. She promptly begins my visit by asking me to prepare breakfast. She also tells me to stop being so complacent. Within four hours of my arrival she is being screwed by Victor in the bathroom, and any complacency I may have had is thoroughly shattered... But all this, considering my short stay in New York, is so much lead under the floorboards.

Ludmilla is exhausted. The exhibition of 18th century costumes is to open in less than a week. Ludmilla says that everything has gone wrong. She requires sympathy... she also demands undivided attention. She asks me to fix her a drink. Resentfully I do as I'm told. She has another stiff drink, and then I ask her about Frank. No shilly-shallying about. I come straight to the point. Why did you leave Frank?

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Oh, I just walked out on him. I couldn't take it any longer. He insisted on holding my arm... For hours on end I would only have the use of one arm. Life became so castrating. Finally, I was so fed up that I told him about Barcelona, Alicante, and about our encounter in Paris. I was so tired of his fucking deviations...

But Frank has his fingertip on the pulsebeat of time, Ludmilla says bitterly. All his business ventures are boldly executed, and well financed... His consistent bold approach, especially with young women, rules out any indecisiveness. Yes, his entire wardrobe of bold checked suits is an extension of this programed performance. Only when it comes to sex does he begin to falter. I suspect that Frank misses the bold checked suits and the bold checked underwear... He can't, says Ludmilla wistfully, adjust to his own nudity. He even took Victor's in his stride. But the instant he loosens his belt buckle, metaphorically speaking, he is in a total funk...

The telephone rings. It is Victor. He tells her not to wait for him. He's been delayed. Oh, all right, she says despondently. She hangs up, and pensively bites her lower lip.

Victor. Age: thirty-two. Hair: blond. Mustache: none... Identifying marks: none that I know... Color of eyes: blue for dispassionate lust. Victor has the perfect build for an eighteenth century courtier... as well as the enlightened dumbness, the dumbfounding dumbness that remains entirely unnoticed in bed.

Initially it was rather unnerving, says Ludmilla. With great sobriety, Victor would give me conflicting advice and stare at my lovely breasts. Later I would let him peek down my blouse. He began to grow on me. Yet I had no intention of making him my lover...

I do not wish to explore Victor's sex life with Ludmilla. As it is, Victor's unsettling habit of entering the toilet when it is occupied, or the bedroom when Ludmilla and I are in bed, speaks for itself. One feels free to speculate about the origin of his stealthy approach, about the origin of his peculiar accent, and of the massive college ring, of the natty ties, and of his

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prematurely aged face with his harried near-sighted look of hard determination, and of the short-lived flashes of lust in his speculative blue eyes whenever his gaze settles on Ludmilla's leg, not the deformed and misshapen one, but the other... or could I be mistaken?

Ludmilla strides up and down her bedroom in her panties. She's in a foul mood. The panties have flowers on them. On most occasions she disdains wearing a brassiere. She discovers a rip in one of her stockings and hurls it at the wall. She's had a trying day. The Fontainebleau costumes borrowed from the Louvre are coming apart at the seams. She shouts: I must get out of this hole.

3

I come to New York fully prepared for maneuvers. Thus far nothing's lost. The flesh will always yield to caresses, but the mind remains as obdurate as ever. It will take more than the combined efforts of Ludmilla and Victor to unsettle me. I will not be agitated, Ludmilla's histrionic efforts to the contrary, by her references to her two weeks stay in my place. Her appeals to my sentiments are too forced to be genuine. I have concluded that she refuses to relinquish the description of my room in Paris because it pleases her to think of our meeting, two years ago, as the first of a number of unsuccessful attempts to break away from Frank. Victor claims that this apartment as well as the Italian sports car she drives belong to a dear friend. I can only think of Frank. Her magnificent leg, the one that is not deformed, continues to exercise its power over me. I will always stand in its shadow. How obsolete the heart has become.

4

The day after my arrival in New York I speak to her about Frank. At first she will only say that he misused her. I soon

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make the discovery that Ludmilla does not in the least object to being used... that is to say she welcomes it... however, Ludmilla will not tolerate intellectual misuse. She remains firm on that. She's also unduly argumentative about it... One does not toy with a woman who possesses one misshapen leg.

Use or misuse, I am informed, is to be energetically applied. Ludmilla may even have a certain amount of physical disrespect in mind... An hour or two can always be set aside for that purpose.

If you like, Victor or you can misuse me after dinner, between a quarter of eight and bedtime... unless I have made other arrangements for that evening. She also volunteers the following: Frank studiously misused her superb talents and distracting figure with its one smashing leg, by largely ignoring them, except on one or two occasions when it suited his purpose.

I have just arrived in New York after four years of living abroad. I do not quite know what to expect. I am given to understand that Ludmilla does not expect any surprises from me. In nine days I shall return to my room in Paris. Fuck surprises. The first day back I shall sleep until noon... I shall forget the inequities that led to my shameful surrender to her demands. Dear Ludmilla has lost none of her former bounce.

5

START AT THE BEGINNING: Victor drops us in front of the apartment building where she is staying. She lights another cigarette while I struggle with my two valises. I follow her into the building. She steps into the elevator... and presses herself into a corner, breathing deeply... Her mouth is open, and the thin lips are unaccountably shaped into a tiny elongated O. A residue of fear clings to my perspiring palms. I have forgotten how large her mouth is... completely overlooked the size of her mouth as I was planning my visit to New York. So far she has not made one single reference to sex. It must be my imagination... my restless, troubled mind that

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is plaguing me. I remain alert. I place the large valise on the elevator floor between my legs... She presses the elevator button, then darts back to her corner where she grips the flat aluminum handrail that is attached to the wall at about the height of her waist. It must be my imagination... all the same I can hear her quite distinctly enunciate the ejaculatory words: fuck, balls, cunt... My vision blurs. My love is so deeply submerged that it will never surface again.

At most my interest in the apartment is only a minimal one. Naturally objects fall into view. I take note of the two built-in closets... the antique escritoire... the Moroccan rugs, as well as the record player that belongs to Alicia. I bought it for her birthday several years ago. Most likely Alicia replaced it with a more expensive one. I remain calm, diffident, entirely unaffected by this sad memory. It is so much more difficult to hide things in a modern apartment... there are fewer recesses, fewer niches, fewer false ceilings. There is a white extension phone in the bedroom. Instead of drapes or blinds there are wood shutters... but they are a far cry from the ones in my room. I change into a fresh shirt in the bathroom. I keep telling myself that I'm off to a good start... it is imperative that I believe this. Much to my annoyance all my shirts are badly wrinkled. One is so easily discomfited by any untoward experience.

I leave the bathroom door open... I continue to talk to Ludmilla. She asks me about my work, but from her disinterested voice I can tell that her mind is on other things. How quickly I have adjusted to her clipped authoritative manner of speaking... and to seeing her undress. She steps out of her dress. Now with both hands behind her back, she searches for the fastener on her brassiere. The effort this takes is visible on her face. From where I stand it appears as if her hands had been pinioned to the wall behind her. This does not strike me as the proper occasion to demonstrate my ebbing affection. She slips into a robe...

I'm so glad you decided to come, she says finally. But don't for a moment think that we can start exactly where we left off... I'm not at all certain what she means... I don't ask her to

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elucidate.

You don't mind our not being alone, do you?

I have the odd and inexplicable sensation of being trapped in this apartment. Now she examines her face in the full length mirror, and shapes her mouth to form the letter O. Victor is in the next room. I can only assume that he has let himself in with his own key.

All evening I master forbearance. I decline to inquire into their true relationship. Why should it matter to me, a kind of stretched out weekend guest, what she and Victor do in the bathroom. It is so simple to jump to an erroneous conclusion. First Victor excuses himself, and leaves the table. Then she goes to the kitchen to fetch the dessert and coffee. Don't run off and desert me, I say jokingly. The next thing I hear is their boisterous shouts, their unabashed shrill laughter. They do nothing to restrain their mirth... or the sound of running water. It is seeping through from under the bathroom door when I get up to investigate. I keep myself in check and do not bring it to their attention. All things considered... not to overlook the soaked bedroom slippers, as well as the inexplicable presence of the two damp pillows on the toilet seat. I am at an utter loss for an explanation. Is this all being done for my exclusive benefit. I am resolved not to take too dark a view of all this horseplay.

In place of bamboo blinds on the window there are wood shutters. It is not quite the same thing. Still it is a pleasant apartment, conveniently located near the park. Above the striped ochre and blue-green couch hangs the framed antique map of Paris I gave Ludmilla as a farewell present. Upon closer examination I notice a tiny X made with a red pencil marking the street where I had lived at the time Ludmilla and I met. The map affords me no pleasure. I would as soon not see this memento of her stay in my former room. In my mind I return to the bookstore on the Left Bank where I first came across the book containing the illustrations of the Great Mosque of Kairouan. Again, walking barefoot, I cross the immense courtyard.

Now Ludmilla joins me in bed. She is lying on her right

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side, and her good leg is rubbing up against my knee. The lights are out in the living room. But where is Victor. I seek solace in her damp arms... She rubs her deformed leg, like a cricket, over my sensitive skin...

Don't worry, she whispers. He can't hear us.

Why hasn't he left?

She carefully considers my question: He's handy to have around.

In what way. I brace myself for the worst.

In every conceivable way.

It is more than two years since I have been caught in the vicelike grip of her misshapen leg. Her soft laughter passes through the stalks of green grass like a fresh breeze on a June night. Cautiously I raise her unblemished and perfect leg, and press it against my chest. She keeps it in that position with the aid of one arm.

Later I return to Victor's presence in the apartment. She keeps having nightmares, she tells me. Each night she revives her secret terrors. She awakes screaming. It helps if there is someone in the apartment to hold her hand. I keep falling asleep while she speaks... while she describes her nightly attempt to postpone the harrowing experience... In her dreams she disguises herself. She comes dressed as a priest, as an airplane pilot, as an agronomist. I remember little of what she tells me. She mentions the gravel path and the magnificent scenery... she crosses the alps on a sled. Her terror is a well-balanced act of self-destruction. She lascerates the people who surround her in her dreams... she maims and decapitates them in order to buy more time for herself. She invents fresh horrors in order not to be surprised by them. I wonder if she has a deformed leg in her dreams. But how can I possibly ask her this question. She does not like her deformed leg to be touched except at the height of passion, when she instructs me to hold it. I stretch out my hand in supplication. She brushes it aside. I don't care for your attitude, she says. She also succeeds in keeping me awake for another hour. It is no wonder that I keep thinking of the small bookstore on the Left Bank. No one disturbs me as I reverently turn the pages of the book

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with its sumptuous illustrations of the Great Mosque of Kairouan... I walk barefoot over the large flagstones of the courtyard. It is after sunset, but the flagstones still retain the heat from the sun.

6

In the presence of Ludmilla's deformity everything recedes in importance. After only three days she has succeeded in distracting me from the color plates, those illustrations that have come to represent my newly acquired grammar. As for that other past, the one where Alicia, with a look of anguish, reigns supreme, the one that does not start or arrive at any configuration remotely resembling the illustrations of the Mosque... it is soon to become completely indecipherable. As a result I shall be a richer man. Since it is clearly no longer a question of repressing the past, now that it has ceased to impose its tyranny upon me, the brain—as insatiable as ever—must be redirected towards enlarged dimensions of satisfaction residing within my newly acquired freedom. After all, the illustrations, as I'm the first to admit to Ludmilla, are only a distraction. They allow me to scrutinize my expectations, my ecstatic joys and my feverish desires in a fresh context.

But obviously, and this is made manifest by Ludmilla's high strung behavior, my distractions are just so much copper tubing... just so many junked radiator caps in Hoboken. She drums her fingers on my left shoulder blade. I wisely abstain from any mention of my singular pastime. The world has come bearing gifts. It will not forsake me simply because I'm alone and unattached. The scent of roses lingers on long after my lips have left the nape of Alicia's neck. Four years later, to be precise. There are a good many straws in the wind to indicate that Ludmilla intends to make use of my visit. Otherwise she would never tolerate my delinquent sexual behavior.

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Breakfast
Breakfast
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Breakfast

Breakfast takes forever: Without being the least bit self-conscious, Ludmilla hurriedly downs, munches, pulverizes eight slices of toast heaped with marmalade. She also drinks three cups of coffee. Admittedly all this is done out in the open. One must concede her a fundamental honesty for not attempting to hide this uncontrollable hunger, nonetheless, the nutritional value of white toast remains debatable. This morning Ludmilla has black rings under her eyes. She is in a hurry and keeps glancing at her wristwatch. I force myself to adjust to her carniverous appetite. Discreetly she lets me know that my offer to help prepare breakfast is most acceptable. A woman of otherwise fastidious taste, she gets carried away at breakfast, pouring the marmalade straight out of the jar. In some respects the breakfast procedure is a most inefficient one. The toaster is defective. Also it is placed at some distance from the table where we eat. Something about Ludmilla, I do not exactly know what, discourages me from offering her any advice. Unable to supervise the toaster from the table I simply have to be on my toes. It is chiefly a matter of coming to grips with the situation. I can easily breakfast later on. Ludmilla drinks three cups of coffee. Since the percolator makes only two, this entails my having to prepare another pot. Emptying the coffee grounds into the paper bag filled to the brim with yesterday's garbage is probably the most discouraging part of it all. The burnt toast I discard are not the result of my inattention, but caused by the toaster's failure to pop up in time... occasionally it pops up too soon, which amounts to the same thing, since I then press it down again.

Under the circumstances, it is hardly surprising that our conversation is a cursory one. She evinces an interest in how I live. My mind is on other matters. I keep burning my fingers.

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I simply have no aptitude for organization. My timing is all wrong.

Don't worry, she says not unkindly. You'll soon get the hang of it.

I am flabby and shifty-eyed. Is it any wonder that hatred frequently holds me in its relentless grip. What am I to make of my rather ill-defined role in this apartment. Ludmilla has stocked up on Medaglia d'Oro and English marmalade. If I'm to stay another ten days, I will see what I can do to add some strawberry jam to the larder.

Now the apartment is empty. No trace of Victor. His name is not listed in the Manhattan directory, or in her address books. I have been letting my brain run rampant. Above all there's that baffling fear of loose and shifting floorboards.

7

A brief rundown of Ludmilla's outstanding features cannot fail to disquiet me further. Her pale finely boned face, at dusk or in poorly lit rooms, bears the unmistakable quality of a Pre-Raphaelite painting. Only an admirer of the Renaissance could have so lovingly recreated the slightly pointed almost translucent quality of the chin... and those myopic blue eyes that she disguises with her piercing stare. She has flawless skin. She is also fragile, with delicate wrists, and possesses one exquisite leg. One perfect unmatched leg... As is to be expected, she looks her best when bedecked with lace. Lace heaped over her marvelous tits, draped over her bare flank, and thrown over her crown of blond hair. Her notable breakfast point: eight delicious slices of toast dripping with marmalade.

Do I have a low creamy voice, she asks.

Will this lipstick do.

Is my skirt too long.

Do you like the shape of my knee... and what about the elbow... and the pink soles of my feet.

For an assistant curator of costumes, her tastes not only

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vary, one might say they are excessively eclectic. Her preference is 18th Century fornication at the court. A popular ladies' magazine claims that she expertly runs her apartment, runs the airy informality of the air-conditioned interior, runs with a slight limp from bed to bath, oblivious of the open shutters, runs from one formal tableau to the next, from one hairy lover to another... ceaselessly, defiantly, spreading her legs, one strong and muscular, the other half its size, against a captivating setting of carpets, damp pillow cases, and Wagner on the record player.

Are you, she worries, sufficiently interested in my nipples.

I avert my eyes.

Her needs menace me like the rows of lace on an Empire dress that is sashed in purple satin. Will she continue to prevaricate, to postpone the final outrage while wearing a strapless evening dress with a tiered skirt cut high in front to reveal a flash of one lovely exposed leg... I can see it, and its mate entwined around an upholstered chair. I feel bound to warn her that one can push things just so far...

8

I keep being struck by her carniverous reactions. Relentlessly, despite my pleas for mercy, Ludmilla sinks her teeth into the soft part of my shoulder, and into the nape of my neck. Unhurriedly, in the poor light, she inspects other sites as well... savagely she bites into my neck. Does this bring back memories of Paris. I dare say it does reawaken something, but my memory regarding her is short. I had the foresight to dismiss and forget most, if not all the details of her brief stay in my room. With a certain degree of luck, the subject need never again crowd my brain, once I return to Paris. I shall simply have to guard myself against any impulse to trace the long livid scratch on my back to its origin... All the same, her teeth implant a familiar resurgence of terror that I had not thought myself capable of feeling. Ah, where are those beautiful days of roses.

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Must you figure everything out in advance, she asks me.

Now she's on edge. She's determined to keep me awake, while she helplessly, almost against her will, subjects me to a seemingly endless account of my room in Paris. I explain that I no longer live there... as she well knows, I have since moved to another place without the least bit of regret. But as far as she's concerned, that room has lost none of its former pervasive significance for her. She catalogues the interior, methodically, with an eye to those details that I have overlooked, or admittedly never noticed. It is depressing to hear her speak so lovingly of the louvered shutters that were painted white on the inside... and of the tiny bathroom, where in place of a tub stood a bidet... and the ancient gramaphone left by a former tenant... and the photograph of the crouching woman. Yes, the photograph seems to have become a most significant landmark for her. It is over two years since she's seen it, but she remembers it vividly. Now in the soft light of the bedroom lamp, sitting upright on the bed, hugging her legs and resting her chin on her knees, she compels me... she forces me to disclaim the accuracy of her account.

Ludmilla insists that she can recall standing mesmerized in front of the mirror that hung in the alcove of my former room... so taken was she by the photograph of the crouching woman that I had, on a moment's whim, stuck into the ornate gilded frame.

Don't you remember, she asks insistently. Don't you remember. It was a warm day, and I was wearing a sleeveless white dress... Looking at the photograph I suddenly felt a chill, and found myself gently caressing my bare arm. You had run down to buy cigarettes, and must have been away all of fifteen minutes, during which time I remained rooted to the spot, quite shattered by the discovery of the photograph... I hadn't spotted it earlier. I must have been sitting with my back to it. I turned just as you were leaving, and my exclamation of surprise must have been audible to you on the landing outside...

In this, for all I know, she may be right.

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Have you put it up in your new place, she asks me gravely. She also tries unsuccessfully to emulate the expression of fear on the woman's face.

Who was she?

The woman... I don't know.

Ludmilla has a tendency to overreach herself... excitedly, in her usual flamboyantly high-strung manner she continues: how can this photograph fail to inflame a man... seeing a woman crouching... utterly defenseless...submitting herself like this... Ludmilla balances herself unsteadily on the bed. Undoubtedly she is correct. Ahh, where are those beautiful, sanctified days of roses... But hair can act as a dense deterrent. The unmistakable stubbles of hair that crown her nipples severely handicap me. One is not the same for the remainder of the coitus... Hair has its place, but not in the mind.

Late at night a door bangs shut. It's all right, she says. It's only Victor leaving. I cannot account for my distress. Love does not have the resolute perfection of the courtyard of the Great Mosque of Kairouan.

NOW LUDMILLA OPENS HER WIDE MOUTH AGAIN.

9

To Ludmilla's annoyance I don't seem to recollect why Alicia and I separated. Have you blocked it from your mind?

Oh, nothing of the sort. I just can't recall what sparked it off. We never discussed it... not face to face, at any rate... It was agreed upon that I would go to France. I just had a bad spell of breaking things. The move was largely a self-protective one. We decided to sleep in separate beds. Alicia felt apprehensive that I might hurt myself. Believe me, the bond that united us was more than her father's money. It was her white skin, and the nape of her neck... also the way she would sit for hours on end combing her long hair. Her languid pose kept reminding me of a painting by Titian...

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Ludmilla catches me looking at her misshapen leg, and bluntly asks: What is it? I automatically reach up to draw the blinds... But there are no blinds in this apartment. Her tongue completely fills my mouth. I take a deep breath, and then another...

...what insurmountable difficulties must have faced the architects of that fantastic Mosque... Alone the difficulties that had to be overcome transporting the immense marble pillars... I can see the caravans coming from afar, loaded down with the polychrome tiles, with the stones, and with the capitals for the Great Mosque of Kairouan. My never having been to North Africa does not prevent me from familiarizing myself with the Mosque's sun-drenched courtyard... or with the row of pillars that are joined together by tie-braces at the top, and the ancient inscription, both in Arabic and Latin, on the massive blocks of stone, many of which were salvaged from palaces, fortifications and basilicas in Italy and Spain... I now can clearly see the egg-yolk white ribbed dome, the cobalt blue frames of the crosshatched windows, and the gleaming white walls...

Ludmilla mumbles in her sleep, then, quite distinctly, says: Darling. But is she speaking to me or to someone else. I make an inventory of all the details I have overlooked on previous occasions as I pass from one section of the Mosque to another. After only one perusal of the book I can accurately describe the illustrations showing the row of classical columns lining the arcades on the East and West, but, not the columns lining the nineteen naves of the sanctuary. The eye is so tremendously selective. The exterior of the Mosque is covered with many layers of white wash, and when viewed from below, the walls stand out in sharp contrast to the Mediterranean sky above.

Unlike most passionate involvements with the past, illustrations, it seems to me, are not necessarily regressive. I find this reassuring. I have no wish to be imprisoned in a Parthenon of rosy memories. The illustrations merely reflect my almost incomprehensible search for a love I have never felt. Ludmilla groans in her sleep. To whom is she speaking in her dreams?

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10

Breakfast
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Breakfast takes forever: Anger makes Ludmilla so much more attractive. She is spoiling for a fight. I pinion her arms behind her back. Although it is quite late, she offers no resistance. She grits her teeth, all the while staring at herself in the mirror.

Now, she says through clenched teeth. This word "now" strikes me as odd. I inspect myself in the mirror. Of course I am not blind to the intensity of her feeling. The word "now" has incapacitated me. When is NOW? I dread its passing. Now everything is beyond my grasp... One must sustain and crowd each NOW with all ones valuables... with all the objects in the apartment, until there's no room left to contemplate its passing...

Ludmilla steps into the bathroom. Quickly, with bold efficiency she applies the lipstick. I observe that she fails to wash... she also neglects to put on a pair of panties. After she has left I discover evidence of our recent bout staining the floor. Later I shall study the floor of the elevator for further evidence of her irresistible charms. I remain dazed by the evanescent NOW. The NOW in my mind has no future. I return to her desk and look at her appointment book. She has put my departure down for seven P.M. In the desk drawer I find a letter from my wife to Ludmilla. You like to see yourself as a woman in chains, Alicia wrote... I recognize countless trite novels and even films in your every move and gesture... I even have come to see the contrived obsessional fantasies of my husband in your highly charged conduct... as well as in the situations that you exploit. In that respect, even he, poor devil, did not get off without paying a small price for his two weeks with you in Paris. I never suspected at the time,

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that when you asked for his address you actually intended to look him up. You must concede that I've always been obedient and uncritical of you and Frank. How readily I permitted myself to be recruited as a witness for your bizarre involvements. You had only to threaten me with the loss of my freedom to make me comply. Now I discover that your freedom consists of being a prisoner. When you were staying with me, I kept repeatedly asking myself: Is this what they did in Paris? Is she emulating him. Your ensuing affair with Victor and Frank was more than I could bear. Subtly you attempted to poison our minds, until one of us would turn against you, and in a fit of anger, inflict upon you all the tortures you desired. You made me despise you since that was preferable and less harmful to loving you. Your deep and profound distrust of love made you invite my husband to stay with you. His equivocal attitude towards women, his potential cruelty and violence gave you a temporary feeling of satisfaction. I know the word "sadist" is a delightfully provocative word for you. But he's not a sadist. He's quite insane, and had he stayed with me one day longer than he did, I would have had him committed to an asylum. He fled for his life, just as I now flee for mine.

Among Ludmilla's books is one that I gave her two years ago. I remember the occasion. We were standing arm in arm in the Tuileries. The roses were in bloom. Ludmilla was laughing. The familiar handwriting, the unmistakable handwriting on the title page of the book I had given her fills me with a profound melancholy. TO LUDMILLA WITH INTENSE LOVE AND ADMIRATION. I had neglected to put down the date. Why do the two lines of the letter V disturb me... why does the letter L fill me with self-loathing... I can read my despicable self-revealing dependency on the distractions provided by the illustrations of Mosques in the letter O. Can I never escape my handwriting. Will the letter E pursue me to the bitter end. Now I seek to detach myself from it.

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II

As far as I can recollect, it is the third window from the left. When the bamboo blinds are raised it is possible to see a section of the paneled wall of mirrors. The sumptuously outfitted bathroom is situated on the second floor as well. But its windows face west, and are therefore not visible from the garden. It is a hot and humid day. I approach Alicia's house with circumspection... I walk quickly, hoping not to be observed.

The letter to Ludmilla no longer rankles. Will you show me your singular lack of surprise... Alicia, will you offer me your cool cheek to kiss. It's no use resisting. I shall have to tie your hands and gag you, because your dreams of delirium might distract me... I will make you crouch on the floor and return the look of anguish to your pale face. How will you explain this situation to Ludmilla? I observe shudder after shudder run down your spine. Now... I hold my wrists under the cold water faucet. How irresistible your inertia... your total lack of resistance. I ask so little of you. Once again, bravely, you look straight into my eyes.

You are not in the kitchen. Your are not in the vestibule, 8 by 3; or in the hall, 6 by 9; or in the living room, 11.6 by 14; or in the dining room, 21 by 17; or in the partly dismantled library, 15 by 19.6; or in any of the closets... I climb the stairs... and tap gently on the door of the bedroom. Overcoming my revulsion I push open the door. It swings back... I exercise a certain restraint to keep myself from hurling obscenities at the pale grey ceiling. The sun is streaming through the windows... Alicia permitted me to resuscitate my childhood in this room. Now I have come to say goodbye. As a child, I remember liking the way the square panels of mirrors formed a grid over everything they reflected. I permitted those six inch squares to dissect my desires... They continue to haunt me to this day. I thought I had freed myself, but I had simply substituted the large flagstones in the courtyard of the Great Mosque of Kairouan for the paneled mirrors of my childhood.

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...the bamboo blind can be lowered with a swift whirring sound, a rasping noise similar to that created when a piece of paper is torn out of a spiral notebook, or when that paper, for instance, is lodged inside the protective wire cage that covers the rotating blades of a small table-model electric fan...

The thickset man is wearing a pin stripe suit. I can see him clearly. He is standing close to my Mother. The bamboo blind is raised. The man has just entered the room, and in his customary way embraced the young boy. It is eight in the evening. It must be Saturday or Sunday on account of my being permitted to stay up so late. Downstairs the table has been laid for eight... but the guests have not yet arrived. If not for the noticeable coolness of my Mother, the man, most likely, would already have left the room. True, she permits him to kiss her on the cheek. Something the man, now standing restlessly at her side, said earlier may explain her irritation with him. After all these years I can no longer remember what it was... besides, if I did hear it, I may not have fully understood its significance. It is quite possible that her anger is due to his returning home so late...

The man speaks to her in his soft and gentle voice, but she refuses to be appeased. The man plays with the cords of the blind, accidentally releasing it, instantly blocking both their view of the garden. It is exactly at this moment that the piece of paper is inadvertantly lodged in the electric fan. The sound must be quite audible... but they do not turn around to look at the culprit. To the boy it sounds as if the bamboo blind was being lowered and lowered and lowered in one continuous motion. Apologetically the man raises the blind. Timidly he addresses her again. This time she deigns to reply, but her low voice is inaudible to me. After an initial hesitation the man then places his square and stubby fingers on her soft arm. One endures the pain of being betrayed without appealing to anyone for help. One also suffers from a feeling of suffocation. They both speak in a low voice in order not to be overheard. Now his hand rests on her bare arm. She remains immobile and makes no attempt to withdraw her hand. Now the square fingers of the man, so different from

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the boy's long and tapered ones, are kneading her soft and pale skin, of which she is so justifiably proud. Doesn't she consider the man's touch objectionable. Certainly nothing on her face indicates any awareness of the impropriety of the man's gesture. In point of fact they continue their conversation as if nothing out of the ordinary has taken place. The man continues to squeeze her arm and she even manages to smile... Downstairs the doorbell rings. Just before leaving the room, she looks distractedly at the boy, as if seeing him for the first time. The man winks conspiratorially, and then in an unusual gesture kisses the boy, who, as soon as they have left the room, turns off the fan and immerses himself in the task of extricating the piece of paper that was accidentally lodged between the blades of the fan.

The blind can be lowered with a whirring sound, instantly cutting off the view of the pale grey ceiling and a section of the paneled wall of mirrors as well as the disembodied slim arm
COLOR: WHITE
with the gold filigree bracelet, that is gripping the cord of the blind. At times one can catch a glimpse of a shoulder... but I can no longer tell if the sound of the descending bamboo blind reaches to the far end of the formal garden, so different from this one... I continue to press my search for you in the bedroom, 18 by 21; in the closets, those spacious closets... I must put my thoughts in order.

Alicia has left in a hurry. In her letter she mentioned her fear, but it was not fear that drove her away, it was caprice... By comparison with Ludmilla she is a neat person... everything that was left behind in her drawers is neatly folded... I am soon enveloped by the scent of roses. The unforgettable fragrance brings tears to my eyes. I leave thumb marks all over the polished brass doorknob.

12

Have you packed yet, Ludmilla asks me when I return to the apartment. But I'm not due to leave for another three

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days... Victor is nowhere to be seen. I have a poor memory. I am exceedingly forgetful, and no longer remember the precise wording of Ludmilla's invitation. I now think it possible that I read something into the invitation that was not there. Was I brought over to torment Alicia? At night, following my visit to Alicia's house, my former home, I lie in bed listening to Ludmilla's trenchant observations regarding her lost youth. She still carefully nurtures the illusion that she is frail and helpless. She lovingly retouches the portrait she paints of herself in the Brooklyn Botanical Garden with the essays of Emerson and the works of Henry James as her sole nourishment. Strange, I keep seeing Stekel's name on the cover of the book she is carrying. A peripatetic philosopher, for whom Aristotle was in no time replaced by Wittgenstein. Now she describes the white dresses she wore as she toured the rose garden. I can hear someone in the next room. It must be Victor.

Ludmilla's calendar of love has always excluded me. She and my former wife have always seen to it that I remain the outcast. Ludmilla seeks uncomplicated affairs. She is drawn to blond mustaches and men like Victor. What makes me so boiling mad, says Ludmilla in her tough and bitchy voice, is your complete disregard of other people's privacy. How dare you trespass... Just because you idolized my breasts gives you no right to search my belongings. You will never give me as much pleasure as Victor does... why... Ludmilla points an indelicate finger at me... you require the illustrations of a Mosque to support your crippled fantasy.

I think it is her anger that I find so irresistibly exciting. Also the way she crosses her good leg over her misshapen one. Sitting beside her, I tentatively extend one hand, placing it over her bare thigh. I'm certainly not contemplating another joust. Ludmilla does nothing to hinder me. On the contrary, she moves her midriff suggestively, shamelessly exposing herself, if I read her motions correctly, to facilitate my bold and totally unrehearsed exploration. Those blue eyes that now stare unseeingly at the antique map that I gave her two years ago as a memento of our brief stay together, have

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on prior occasions followed an untold number of spectacles between Victor, Frank and Alicia. I too, I laughingly tell myself, have my finger firmly pressed on the pulsebeat of time.

...from where I now stand, her eyes are almost in a straight line with the doorknob. My bare feet rest on the floor some eighteen inches apart. Ludmilla hisses. One of her earrings has fallen to the floor. Poor Ludmilla, no amount of loving will replace your deformed leg... Now Ludmilla and I contemplate her other leg. Our heads are bent in silent adoration. Temporarily united, we breathe in and out in unison.

We hold the leg in a strong grip... we will not release it. I have never felt closer to Ludmilla. Again I am filled with a passionate love for her. I think I now know why I was so happy when I met her. I thought we might cross the great desert together. I pretended, with her assistance, to decipher my recent past in her eyes... a past that exluded Alicia, and the now vacant house. All that time Ludmilla knew that her shriveled leg had wormed its deathlike way into the labyrinth of my mind. Now that you know what death is, the leg seemed to say, you will never cease to respect me. I, the second leg, am the antithesis of all your hopes. Embrace me to your heart.

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Lou Horvath

Not Here

Jean Vu
Lived in Paris
Rue Rimbaud
1063

Jean Nu
Murdered his brother with three lies
One one birthday eve
1924.

Adolescent in Touly
The waters of the lake continuously commit suicide
From the comity of their beauty.
Shoreline shades
Who in turn died
Every night for the rest of your life,
Think of me inundating myself in the perfect.

But this is 1972
Two decades into the 1 MAN One mind Period
Of human existence
As we know it, and Jean Nu has gone
On to what we don't know
It
Appears that he found it dionysian
To extract the perverse from cream child living
Women of Megara.

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Stephen Canada

Black See Girls

Passing through,
passing through the sea's afternoons

Empty of robin's eggs
we walk through thick lizard

Black sea girls
bump and grind, rock and roll

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We Believe Like Wildfire

We believe like wildfire
In a hair-like echo

Silences of darkness are
Windows into water

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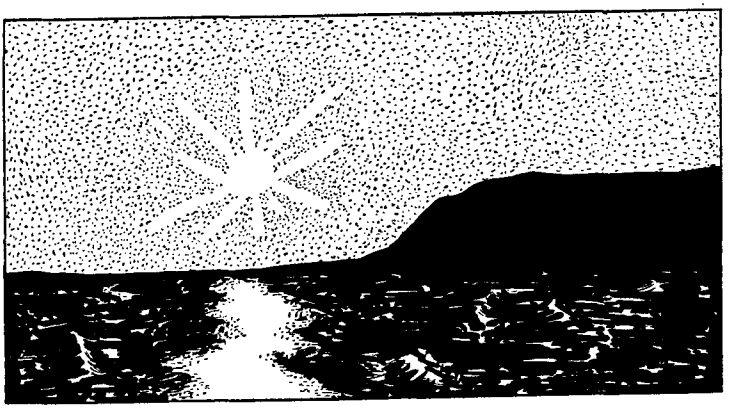
RIALTO PHOSPHENES

BRUCE WOLMER
DENISE GREEN



AS THE SUN SET, SHE

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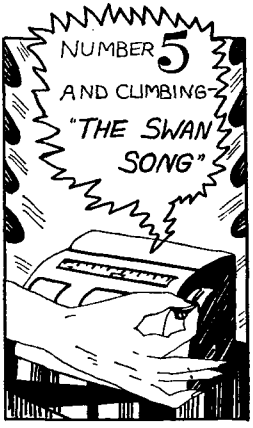
SHE HAD FIXED
ME WITH HER EYES



"I'LL BE DOWN TO GET YOU IN A TAXI, HONEY
BETTER BE READY BY HALF-PAST EIGHT"

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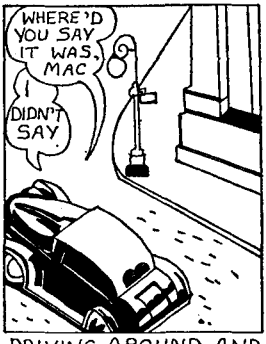
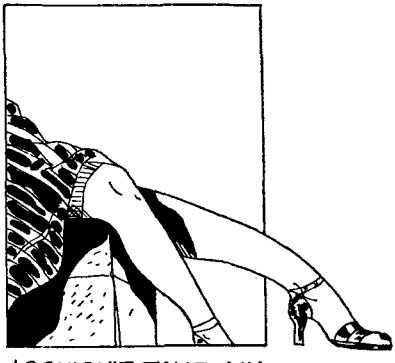
DREAMING MY FLORIDA ORANGES DREAM



DRIVING AROUND AND
LOOKING FOR THE
MAKE-BELIEVE BALLROOM



I COULDN'T TAKE MY
EYES OFF HER SHOES

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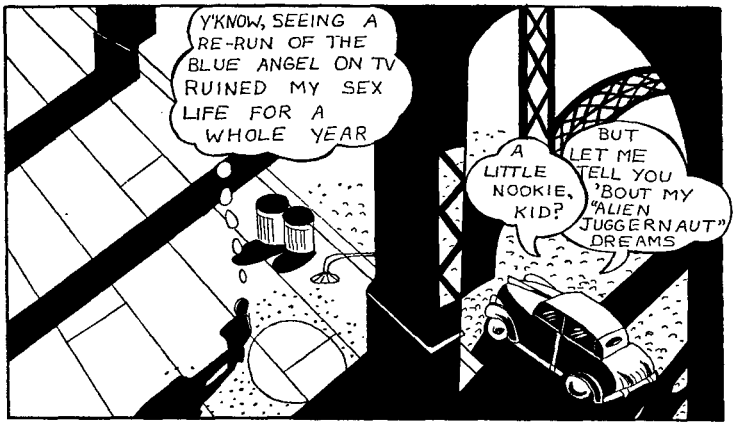
Y'KNOW, SEEING A RE-RUN OF THE BLUE ANGEL ON TV RUINED MY SEX LIFE FOR A WHOLE YEAR
A LITTLE NOOKIE, KID?
BUT LET ME TELL YOU 'BOUT MY "ALIEN JUGGERNAUT" DREAMS

"WHAT ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT, DEAR?"
"NOTHING. I'VE GOTTEN BEYOND THAT STAGE."

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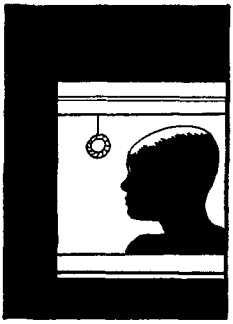
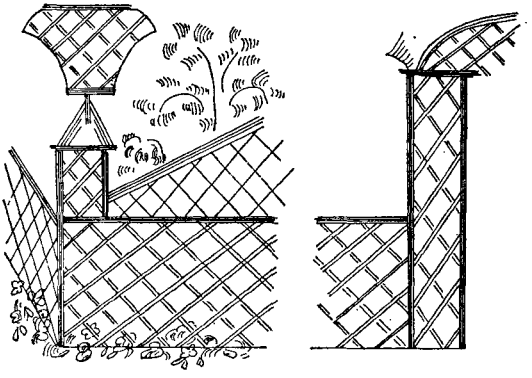
I COULDN'T TAKE MY EYES OFF HIS SHOES



I LOOKED OUT THE WINDOW

SAW MYSELF IN THE TWILIT FIELDS, A BOY



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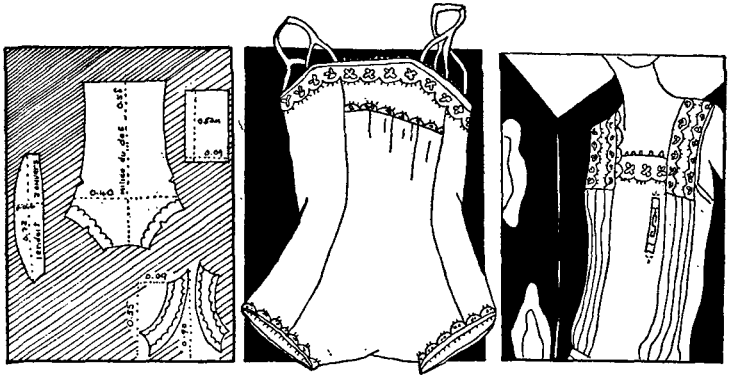
"IT WAS TERRIBLY THRILLING, LIKE ... LIKE EATING YOUR FIRST OYSTER.



FAR BEHIND

CASH 'N' CARRY DAFFY IN LILAC

ROUND I

REMEMBER RICKY STAR, THE BALLET DANCING WRESTLER?

ROUND II

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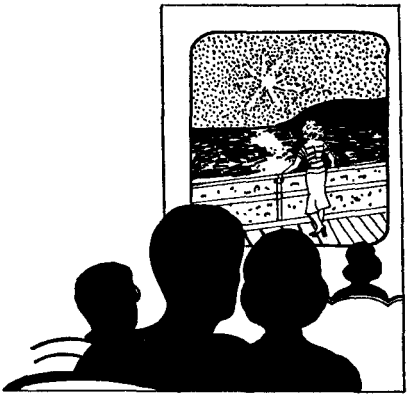
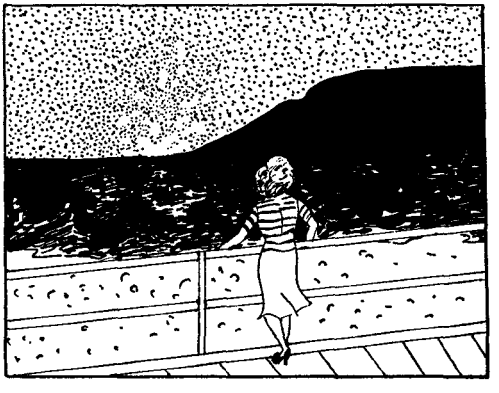


AT THE RIALTO...



...SHE STOOD. THE SUN HAD SET.

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Ambassador

Hampton Hawes
Don Asher

Ever since I was a kid reading *Terry and the Pirates* I've always dug uniforms. I dug football uniforms, the clash of team colors against each other, and the heavy German uniforms in World War II movies; I dug braid and insignia, Ike jackets were very cool and air force blues. Whenever I drew a picture in school it was of an air force pilot in smart blues with wings and ribbons. My greatest desire was to fly a P40 over Europe and come back and have my parents say, "You were a bad motherfucker up in that sky." I think deep down I must have been a really patriotic cat. The American flag has always looked groovy to me, though I came to dislike a lot of the people representing it.What screws up the flag too often are the people who try to interpret for everyone else what it stands for. But I believe my fondness for the flag is what put me in the army when I wasn't supposed to go in, when I could have got out easy as running an F7 chord.

I was the only bona fide 4F I knew who got drafted. At Fort Ord my records somehow got stamped 1A, but when the last doctor saw the scars on my arms he put me on medical hold and sent me to a psychiatrist who asked if I wanted to get

"The Ambassador" is an excerpt from *The Autobiography of Hampton Hawes*.

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out. Now this was 1952 when representing the American flag wasn't that much of a drag. I started thinking about Terry and the Pirates and the flag and said I wasn't all that sure I wanted to get out. He left it up to me, told me if I thought I was going to make it, okay, but if I thought I was going to get fucked up and strung out again, which I eventually did, then I ought to split. When I finally walked out of there, it hit me like the Santa Ana wind. I could have got out. Shit, I didn't want to go anywhere, I just wanted to play music. But for some crazy reason—and as I look back I was completely crazy in 1952 (it was almost *fashionable* to be crazy then; musicians would go around saying, "Catch that crazy motherfucker," and it was like a badge of praise)—I kept walking in a daze down that hot dusty road straight into the army.

My records kept on getting fouled up. By the time I boarded ship for Korea I'd been AWOL so many times and served time in so many different stockades there was bound to be a lag in the paper work. Forty of us were marched to the boat under shotgun guard. When the boarding officer came to me he looked at his list and said, "Who the hell are you?" I said, "Shit, man, you ought to know, you put me on the boat." He said, "You can't go to Korea, I don't have your records." I said, "Well I'm here, what do you want me to do?" and he said, "Don't worry about it."

They put us, the forty under guard, down in the hold, and about the time the boat was passing under the Golden Gate Bridge a navy officer came down and said, "Gentlemen, welcome to the United States army." All I could think of was if only I'd been in the air force with my wings I'd probably end up a colonel and groove right through to the end of the war. After a while they let us up on deck and when we looked back, there was San Francisco no bigger than a thimble. What they were telling us in effect was, OK, you're free, go jump off the deck if you think you can swim.

Yokohama Bay was so filled with ships it was like a toy armada floating in a bathtub. There was no parking space at

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the piers so we had to stay anchored overnight. They showed a movie, but most everyone stayed on deck staring at the shore lights and talking about one thing: *Think of all those Japanese broads waiting for us, we could be screwing like mad.* I went along with them, agreeing, Right, you right Jim, crazy bitches, never had no Japanese ass, but what I was thinking was, *This is the Orient, man, there has got to be a lot of groovy dope in that town.*

The continued foul-up of my records kept my ass from being shipped to the front lines in Korea. I was sent to Camp Drake, a replacement center in the town of Asaka, which was cool; they had Japanese cats doing KP and chicks on the gate as interpreters.

On my first pass, shoes shined and pants creased like any sharp potato-fed U.S. soldier, I split from the group heading for the town bars wondering how I was going to score. All my life I'd heard from junkies that dope in Japan and China was it. Now at the time I wasn't strung. I had a habit when I entered the army, kicked, but every time I was AWOL or home on a pass I'd use. But with the time in the stockades and the boat trip it had been some three months since I'd used.

I started walking into town along some rice paddies trying to figure out a course of action. I knew I couldn't stop some strange cat on the street and ask because—number one, there was the language barrier, and two, I was smart enough to know there were probably some undercover CID people around. My mind was just focusing on the idea of *sin*—where there's one kind of sin there's usually another, i.e., a whorehouse was the thing—when like a genie out of a bottle a little old cat popped out in the road in front of me. Strange brand of genie wearing a kind of hip hat, funny raincoat and tennis shoes. He said in broken English, "Hey, where you goin to?" Just goin, I said. "You want nice girl?" Okay.

He trotted down the road ahead of me and the next thing I knew I was sitting in a house on a bamboo bench and Mama-san is parading some sharp groovy chicks in kimonos before me, bowing and smiling, doing their part to get me excited. I turned down the first chick and Mama-san brought on two

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others, equally fine, opening their komonos and flipping their breasts around so I could appreciate their youthfulness and spring. I said I didn't want them either. By this time everyone's looking at me funny, thinking this dude's got to be in the wrong pad, must be looking for a nice fat Japanese boy, and I'm losing heart too. But when the sliding door opened to admit the fourth chick I happened to glance down the hall and saw a skinny bitch pushing a broom. I almost fell out. Felt my face break into a big happy grin because even at a distance I could see that this chick's arms look like the Penn Central switching yards. I'd never seen arms with that many scars, could hardly conceive of anyone pumping up their veins so bad. She was emaciated, couldn't have weighed more than eighty pounds; her jaw was sunken, there were dark circles around her eyes and it was understandable why they had her pushing a broom. No soldiers were going to pay any kind of bread for her, so if you can't fuck at least keep the place clean. When I saw that mess of tracks I said to Mama-san, That's it, that's who I want. She looked back at the broompusher, then at me, puzzled because I'm the most unlikely-looking junkie she ever saw; I've been eating three squares a day, plenty of army potatoes, and am coming on fat and sassy. Suddenly she's in a sweat, batting her eyes and fluttering her fat hands, Oh no, bad girl, not good girl for you—so I figured the ultimate thing to do to close the deal is to bring out my wallet. Mama-san glanced at my bread and I knew if I'd said right there I wanted to screw the bamboo bench I was sitting on she would have given me the bench to screw. Ah-so. She went down the hall to tell the broompusher she's it, and that bitch's eyes lit up; she must have thought Buddha's elevated her back to the good graces and done sent her somebody to love. Dropped the broom, happy as a kid, and went running into a nearby room. You wait, Mama-san said, she'll prepare for you. I didn't need anyone preparing for me but I didn't want to give my game away. Let her put on the powder and lipstick and whatever else, do the whole thing. I'd waited this long anyway. When she was ready I went down the hall into the room, and even as I pulled her into

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a corner and whispered in her ear, "Ahen" (heroin), she kept smiling and bowing, thanking Buddha for relieving her of the broom, putting her back in harness. I had to say again, "Ahen" and it must be very hard for an Oriental chick's eyes to get round but suddenly this eighty-pound Japanese junkie is Orphan Annie backing away from me frightened and cowering against the wall, those moon-eyes taking in a healthy potato-fed American soldier, wondering since when's the CIA hire spook undercover agents. I rolled up my left sleeve to show her and now there were moons within moons. Soldier shoot up? You dumb bitch, what do you think I been trying to tell you for the past minute? She took me to the window which looked out on a courtyard and signalled to the little genie in the hip hat and tennis shoes who was squatting down in the dirt doing something to a bicycle. He came over, she jabbered a few sentences at him, slipped him some of my loot and in the time it would take to play three slow choruses of Aunt Hagar's Blues, the little guy had cycled off, copped, and was back with the shit.

Now this chick who's been on a broom for months, wasted, probably having to steal what little dope she got, is so goddamned happy to have found a compadre she's laughing and kidding around, hitting me on the arm, and I'm as happy as her. I've got it, found my source, we're like two kids racing across a meadow with bright balloons and she's getting the accessories out of a bureau drawer, being very careful with the amount of shit she's allotting me, doling the stuff onto a crushed cigarette package shaped to a tiny basin and adding water, she doesn't want to lose me, knows I'll be back, scared I might die in this goddamn place six thousand miles from Jefferson Street. "Aren't you going to cook it?" I ask. She doesn't know what I'm talking about. I'm thinking, How can this bitch have all those tracks and not even know how to cook it? No cookie in Japan, she finally gets across to me, just draw it up straight ahead and shoot. *Use more. No-no-no, too strong. Listen, do you think this is the first time I shot shit? I've been shooting shit from Watts to 130th Street* (letting her know what a bad cat I am), *come on, shake it out.* No-no, too

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much. *Will you listen to me, I'll shoot Unguentine, battery water, don't make no difference—it's my money, if I die I die, fuck it, Fats Navarro went down, we ain't no super race...* Please-no, I like you. *I like you too, baby, but don't blow the light, I want to get tore up!...* We compromised, she shook out a little more then squatted down in front of me, her kimono parting—not all that bad, I thought and made a mental note, One of these days I'm going to ball this bitch but for right now let's get high. She tied the tourniquet, looking at me, still fearful and I'm saying, *Don't grade no tests till the bell rings mother, will you goddamn hurry it up.* She stuck the needle in, jacked it off so the blood came in, got ready to shoot and I'm getting ready to say, "This shit ain't nothin." I looked in those dark-ring almond-eyes and said, "This shit ain't..." and it was all over. Over and out. After all that conniving and pleading, going through all those changes to get a shot. When I woke up, the whole family, Mama-san, Poppa-san who had come in, couple little kids, all the young fine chicks and my bitch were sitting around in a circle fanning me, saying, "Yes... ah-so..." Groovy.

Then and there I became the best goddamn ambassador for the United States. The American image over there at the time was soldiers balling Japanese daughters, buying beer, drop a kid a quarter for a shoeshine, 4-star suckers walking around showing off the stars and stripes and generally trying to lead these Orientals into more affluent ways, right? But I came over with my black ass messed up and right away they understood me. Took me into the bosom of their family. See, American soldier fucked up too. That's what gets you across, opens the lines of communication.

The next day when I got my pass and started down the little road past the rice paddies with some pears and candy bars I'd bought, the word had already got around: "Uma-san's coming." (They didn't know how to say "Hawes," it kept coming out "Horse," so rather than offend me they hit on "Uma-san," as "Uma" is Japanese for horse.) "Uma-san's coming." Little kids on bicycles met me halfway. Mama-san greeted me at the door saying, "Ah, ah-so, Uma-san." I

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hugged her and said, "Where's my woman?" She was in back getting prettied up, happily putting on her powder and lipstick. So I lay around the parlor sharing my pears and candy while Mama-san and Poppa-san brought in grapes and other goodies. Here was a house of prostitution and they were treating me like a son, like King Farouk. But you know when the sliding door opened and my queen came in, skinny as a stalk, her little sunken face snow white against ruby lips and dark eyes, I glanced past her down the hall and saw one of those fine sharp bitches I'd turned down yesterday. Damn if they didn't have her on the broom.

One night I played at a Red Cross club and some people said, "Oh, shit, there's a soldier plays good." Somehow word filtered down to Yokohama, where the 289th Army Band was stationed, that there's a jazz musician at Drake who's cut some records and he's not even assigned. So the lines of communication were opened and I was pulled into the army band. It was a sad leave-taking after three months with my adopted family. I thought of all the good days at the house, the camaraderie and King Farouk grape sessions, the nights I pulled fire guard, walking up and down in a striped helmet with a flashlight and walking stick and some of my family always on the other side of the fence, walking along with me so I wouldn't get lonely.

The day I left for Yokohama they were all there to see me off, the chicks and the little kids, Mama-san and Poppa-san, crying and carrying on as if I were being taken away to train as a Kamikaze pilot, knowing they weren't ever going to see me again. It got to me so I started crying too. I'd never known that kind of affection before. Then the train was ready to leave, I was hugging everyone, my woman was laying a traveling supply on me and I thought, Well here I go, big city, ready for all that shit again. Because during those three months I had got strung and I knew it was serious.

My third night in Yokohama I saw two soldiers nodding in a service club and said to myself, Something's happening here.

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With my first pass I wandered into town along one of the main streets, down a line of bright neon bars, the lights wavering through the fog like streaks of lime and lemon paint in a greasy river. Picked up on some high-pitched female cussing through a doorway and out of one of those bars came a chick looking like Susie Wong, the hippest baddest whore on the block, fine and tall and strutting like proud.

She called to me from across the street, "Hey soldier, doko-e-ikima-su-ka?"

I knew what that sounded like and just kept on walking.

"Doko-e-ikima-su-ka?"

Kept walking.

"Hey, motherfucker, where you goin?"

Now I stopped. Faced this bitch across the street in her tight shiny skirt, hands on hips, feisty-looking like she owned the whole block and said, "Goin to get high."

She smiled and said, "You don't know, do you?"

I said, "Do you?"

She said, "You bet your ass. C'mon."

"I'm comin."

So I'd found me another compadre. How was I to know "doko-e-ikima-su-ka" meant "where you goin?"

I said, "What's your name?"

"Be-bop."

"What are you talkin about, you don't know nothin about any be-bop."

"I know who Bird and Dizzy are."

"Now how could you know them, sittin way over here all your life eatin rice 'n shit?" Excited and nervous, I said, "You've never had any black-eyed peas, you don't know anything about any blues," totally naïve, you dig, about across-the-sea lines of communication in this field.

"Why should you know about them and not me?" she said.

"Cause I'm a damn musician, that's why."

This blew her mind. She said, "I'll take you to the Harlem Club where there's a girl Toshiko plays like Bud Powell."

Harlem Club? Bud Powell? She had to be coming out of

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some funny bag or I was dreaming. "Carry on, Suzie," I said, "lead me to your Harlem club, then we'll cop."

I sat in the back of the club with her watching Knobby Totah, an Arabian bass player I'd just met in the army band, tune up for the first set. The drummer joined him and then this little chick in a kimono sat down at the piano and started to rip off things I didn't believe.

"See what I mean?" Be-bop said.

"Uh-huh." I'm looking at the funny kimono and the little Japanese hands going biddly-bip-de-bop, all the right chords and intervals, thinking, What's this bitch doing over here playing so natural and authentic so far away.

After the set she came over with Knobby and said, "You're Hampton Hawes, I was hoping you'd come by." And the next thing she said as we shook hand was, "Have you ever met Bud Powell?"

It shook me up, the sounds were filtering out from the States over oceans across rice paddies, these Asians knew about Bird and Dizzy and Bud and all the time I'd thought nobody past 52nd Street or Jefferson in L.A. could possibly be on to them.

Toshiko and I started hanging out together, grooving and playing for each other. She was a star in Japan at the time; if baseball had been as big as jazz, she would have been Stan Musial or Willie Mays. At first I thought she was only hanging out with me to talk about Bud, to be close to the source. I had recorded, was getting known in the States, and if I wasn't Bud Powell I was maybe two or three grooves removed from him which was the closest she was goin to get. What she probably didn't realize was how good she played, so she didn't really need me in that respect. Later on she made it on her own in the States. Anyway I soon discovered she dug me for myself and we developed a deep and lasting friendship.

But Be-bop/Susie Wong was my savior those months in Yoko. She turned out to be just what I thought she was when I saw her that first night through the fog in her shiny silk skirt: the baddest proudest strung-out whore on the block.

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I'd get tricks for her and she'd use part of the bread to cop for us both. When the cats came from Korea on R & R I'd say, You want to meet the finest broad in Yokohama? Then I'd just walk them into the club and they'd pull out their wallets so fast the bills and cards would spill to the floor. I suppose you could say I was her pimp, but we were strung bad and she didn't want either of us to get sick. It was a convenient working arrangement.

I knew it was just a matter of time before I started messing up again. They put me in charge of the swing band. No stripes, everyone else in the group outranked me, but for two hours a day they were on call for rehearsal and took their orders from me. It wasn't a bad little band. We had stock arrangements with grade-school chords and voicings and I showed them how to play better harmonies so we wouldn't get a Tin-Pan Alley sound. Even the old fat-back career sergeants started to dig it. When we played for a dance or show it got off the ground and the reception was generally good. But little things started cropping up. Playing a parade with the marching band I'd find I had on argyle socks with a brown uniform. At a party for some generals and high embassy officials, working with my trio out front, I'd see a couple of four-star suckers staring at me, their faces green, and discover I'd left my insignia and brass, all polished, back on the dresser; I was working that top priority gig in a blank uniform. Little things that I seemed to have no control over. Word started spreading around official quarters to be careful of Hawes, cat might do anything, delegate him to your pay-him-no-mind list. I wasn't messing up in any obvious standout way, you understand, but neither was I taking care of business because every night after work I'd pick up Be-bop and we'd go over to her house and get tore up. I knew the CID was growing suspicious but I couldn't help myself. The guys in my outfit dug what was coming down and tried to protect me. Whenever an investigator called to check on me, the cats in the band, even my sergeant and commanding officer, would clam up, then shoot it back to me: the CID is hip to you, Hampton, be cool. Everyone was beautiful, want-

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ing to help. But I was too far gone, there was really nothing I could do.

One night I was up in Be-bop's second-story pad with a soldier on R & R. As usual wearing my low quarters instead of boots because you have to take your shoes off to enter a Japanese house and if I wanted to beat a quick retreat I wouldn't have time to be tying no boots. And this particular house had been staked out before. We were getting into things pretty good when a little kid came tearing by on his bicycle shouting up, "MP comin, MP comin!" I think I know why our army is having so much trouble with secrecy leaks in Vietnam: those Asian kids on their cycles are bitches as watchouts. Many's the time I've known about the approach of the MPs or CID minutes before they arrived. But this kid tonight was a shade slow. He jumped off his cycle, ran into the house yelling, "MP comin!" and no more than ten seconds behind him the door came crashing down. I got into my low quarters and jumped out the window, landing on the roof of the one-story house next-door. Went through the roof thinking, Everybody got to die, all kinds of casualties on the road to truth, and came down in the kitchen with a lot of splintered wood and sawdust. Told the woman at the stove "Go mena si" (sorry) and split.

Now to show how insane or forgetful I was, I ran down the alley and out into the street feeling peaceful and cool because I still had my pass. Watched from a distance the jeeps and flashlights slashing at crazy angles and said to myself, I'll just go back down there and check things out. Strolled back to where I'd just run from, casual, like a spectator, ready to say, What's goin on? What you do, find some GIs or somethin? A lot of time seemed to have elapsed. When I reached the house everyone had gone—jeeps, flashlights, everything human and mechanical had split. Wandered through the empty groundfloor rooms, saw a couple ounces of shit by a hibachi someone had missed, pocketed it and calm as a monk in a cloister wandered back out.

Maybe a week or two later as I was coming back from chow the sergeant said, "CO wants to see you, Hampton."

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"Okay." When I walked in the barracks the CO was standing by my foot locker with two cats, one of them in civvies. They wanted to take me in for a urinalysis. The CO, still protecting me, said, "Are you following procedure? This man has his rights." "Let's go," the CID said. "Go along with them, Hampton, they'll bring you back," the good CO said.

Even before the results of the urinalysis were in I gave myself away, got sick in the lockup overnight and they had to take me to the hospital. Wasn't any use; no way in the world now I could say, What's all this shit about, nothing's wrong with me, man. When I woke the next morning they gave me morphine and put me in the nut ward. Somehow whenever I'm in that ward I always get put in with an alcoholic. True to form, that afternoon they brought in a nice-looking white kid, blue eyes and blond hair, maybe just married, baby on the way, home every weekend on pass to have Sunday dinner with the folks and in-laws—looking so blond and all-American, like Terry and the Pirates except his eyes were fucked up. When we were alone he looked at me with his fucked up blue eyes and begged me to help him because there was a damn rooster in bed with him wearing tennis shoes.

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Loren Paul Caplin

Charlie's Eye

Charlie's eye was hurt bad and a
spider web of red blood
was dripping from his left face and
he asked me to drive him back there,

at first i didn't know
he had a gun but
figureded it quicky as we were on
a prided revenge ride like a beaten
boy, that he was, because some
stollen kitten shit or fur or
affection or dejection on some
druged level where knives were shown and
he hit first, lucky too, for
Charlie was shaking with stupidity
and might have stabbed that guy first in front
of the girls and i suppose i
was selfish, for thinking of the
next day, when the police would give
me a ring and poor Charlie would
be cleaning his lacerations in jail
and then they probably would
snuff me too for a while before
bail could be raised, although i'd
probably be held as an accomplice to
murder, whose murder, i'd say,
and tell them i didn't know where
i was driving and about the
gun, what about the blood on his face and
the hate in his eyes they'd
rebuke and i would admit
to have seen this too before
i drove him. why did i drive him then

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they'd ask why did i drive him, because
i said, or i thought, or he felt or i
sensed that he couldn't drive
from the spider web of loose veins that smithereened the
left side of his face like the wicked
rings of a bulls eye and of course
the glass from his shades were also missing
on that side,
so i knew it would be a puke hassle
the next day, being rounded up under lights and
police breath, fat breath,
motorcycle breath, of being in a black
and white car for 8 hours, from hanging
around with mug shots all day and i could
only smile that such a fate awaited me
since it would be as though my own T.V.
went loony and before i could change
channels something would be stuck and
the changer my hand struggled upon would
become the door knob from the room i
had been watching on the tube, into rooms
perhaps worse since they were adjoining
and unallowed to be viewed by the public
audience. this dream as i drove seemed like
a stoned hassle so i told Charlie that
i'm not saying what and what not he should be
doing but if he could just look at 2 weeks
off and think about the stolen pussy and lost pride and
women spectators of this night and bet
that whole stake on a special scale
made for winning gamblers, against the
hassle of the rest of his life maybe his
own foolness would be clear,
but we were there, now
he pulled it out and it even shined
in the dark not like a poem or
a cliché but simple as it was, the outline
of a black marketed Beretta, he paused

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before opening the car door and a feeling
of tomorrows hassle was there again and i
spoke again, slowly, this whole thing was too
cheap a picture to be taking our time in
a 1951 Peugeu on the corner of Telegraph Avenue
and 47th in Oakland, my heart was calm,
what a duty this hassle, what a hassle this
duty was getting—he began to cry and
i drove him back
and remembered the cisco kid, and paladin and
dragnet, and all the war movies and all the
circus movies and football movies and get-
away movies and didn't want to blame them,
after all i just saw them like this night,
with out passion, a little maybe i
felt towards the end.

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Jim Gustafson

Detroit

The cops don't carry magnums of champagne
in the backseats of their cruisers.
In my town, seven year old kids know how to steal
motorcycles,
and where they can get new serial numbers.
Watch out, keep down.
My father was the star of the Demolition Derby,
my mother sang with the Les Elgart Band until her voice
gave out.
But this won't get me a Liberty Bond Sandwich,
or a banjo good enough to carry to California.
When it gets too hard, go soak your head in a bucket of
gasoline.
There isn't a work-clothes store in this whole city
that will sell me another black t-shirt with a pocket on credit.
I can't take it.

* * *

Let's steal the hubcaps off Cadillacs
and submit them to *The Paris Review*—
I'm tired of being treated like a junkie with a lisp.

* * *

Save your dead pigeons, Monty, and sell the pelts off your
rats.
Call Bruno's Bump Shop, and say "number 437 on Tuesday"
and see what happens.
Walk into a drugstore, look real together,
buy a New York Times and a pack of Winstons,
stare into the woman clerk's eye,
and say "machismo".
See how long you live.

* * *

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He leaves Detroit because he's tired of selling his asshole for
gumdrops.
In California *everyone* has a sports car, but he
isn't even going to argue anymore.
His mother sang her ass off at the UAW picnic,
and it didn't get her a rib, or a watermelon seed, or a glass of
grape Kool Aid.
Write that down on your scorecard, and send it to the Pope.
This boy is bitter.
To get the situation straight,
a handful of Texaco road maps, and a head full of seaweed
would be better than this.
Blow up a piano in memory of Detroit,
and swing open them gates Henry Ford, I'm walking through,
and I have a squirrel gun and a beaker of acid
that says you can't stop me.

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For Jack

The old Hudson is an odd lumpy cock
standing on its nose in a ditch full of mud.
I want to think that you're asleep
in the backseat.

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Meter, Measure
or
Catalogue Raisonné

Judith Rascoe

I SELF PORTRAIT WITH BAY, 1909. Water colour and oil. The National Gallery.
Leaves? Body of water? Scent? Misspelled potentate? He is now 137 years old, or 85. Decades fall like wooden chairs before his inattention. His hair is countable: a couple of hundred strands, more or less. Babies and old men don't bother to look like human beings: their faces have other needy purposes. Once he was plume-y and had a lovely profile, a favorite of snapshooting women friends; no shoulders to speak of but "nice" hands. When he painted this self portrait he sat askance a wardrobe mirror, wearing a dressing gown. She (unknown) liked him without his clothes. "It doesn't look like you! It doesn't look human!" she said. And now that her prophecy's answered, nobody can remember what the last word means.
— Does it refer to that blue bit lower right, sir?
— I don't know.

II WOMAN OF BAYONNE, 1919. Oil. Collection of Doctor and Mrs. Smith. A joke.*
The subject is a smoked ham. Or "her ham" as a contempo-

* I am a comedian, not a humourist, he said. Colin Parts has, however, found this remark in the letters of Nathan West, an American writer.

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rary letter attests. Her leg. Mrs. Douglas Wynham-Davies has said that he proposed a "Jack the Ripper" triptych, wishing, in her words, to get at the "bone beneath the skin." "I wasn't slim," said Mrs. Wynham-Davies. The inset photograph was taken in 1922—the face obviously the one that haunts works II, III and VIII.

III LANDSCAPE, 1922. Water colour and oil. Private collection.
Mrs. Wynham-Davies' face is the "cloud" in the upper middle of the painting. The small figure, lower middle, a nude male, caused a sensation in the 1929 Gimpel Fils exhibition. The detail was subsequently covered with an almost perfect circle of crimson madder tempera—an example of the pervading humor of the artist. In 1943 the crimson madder was removed, with an unforeseen decline of popularity for the painting ensuing. Asked if he plans to restore the tempera addition, he has replied:
— What tempera addition?
— The circle.
— No.

IV MY DOG BYRON, 1930. Oil. Collection of the artist.
Perhaps the most controversial piece in the exhibition, Number Four seems at first look a coldly naturalistic portrait of a supine Belgian griffon, its legs raised haphazardly, against a strident green field. Further study shows, however, that the dog's "fur" has been created by countless delicate glazings. One opinion, widely accepted, is that the painting was done over a period of a dozen years—a fact that would account for the extraordinary crispness, the pointillist resonance of otherwise subdued tints. Sir Kenneth Clark has called it a "brush-wiper," and in 1950, when the artist said this painting was his favorite, critics suspected another joke,* but the nature of the joke remains unresolved.

* See II, above.

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V LANDSCAPE, 1935. Oil. The Tate Gallery.
A tree. Its trunk fills the canvas. One presumes that the dash of green upper right represents a leaf. The bark texture, on the other hand, seems deliberately transparent. Other landscapes, now lost, are suggested by faint shadows deep beneath the glaze.

VI LANDSCAPE, 1937. Oil. The National Gallery.
A leaf. The green permeates the canvas except for its submission, momentarily, to a strip of red: the vein.
— What sort of leaf is it? a student asked.
— It doesn't look like a leaf to me. (From transcript of symposium arranged by Colin Parts, 1958.)

VII LANDSCAPE NUMBER 4, 1938. Oil. Private collection.
The number "Four" rendered in silver foil on a field of oil rinses. This work was a *cause célèbre* when American customs officials called it a tradesman's sign and threatened to charge duty. Not long afterwards, American reporters asked why it had been given its title.
— I did not wish to paint number three,* he replied.

VIII WOMAN/PEAR, 1941. Oil. The Tate Gallery.
The most famous portrait of Mrs. Wynham-Davies. Welles Roentgen has written in his book of memoirs, *Without Doors*, that he raised the issue of Ingres' Odalisque with the artist when Number Eight was first shown:

> "Can't you see?" he exclaimed. "It's nothing like!" My question—which upon recollection seems not so innocent as I persuaded myself it was—had thrown him into a towering rage. He withdrew the painting from the show and brought it back a week later: the modelling on the inner thigh had unquestionably been altered (though some have called me a liar for saying so) and the whole expression of the eyes reworked.

* Now the title of Helene Wendler Mahler's biography (Macmillan, 1964).

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IX FREIGHTER, 1942. Oil. Collection of Welles Roentgen.
Obviously a joke—or at least an irony. Impasto in scarlet, middle right, has begun to crack.

X BOTTLE, 1947. Oil. Collection of Lord Pell.
— In what sense is this a bottle, sir?
— I no longer know.
— Is it a metaphysical bottle?
— I don't think so.
— A material bottle then?
— Is it a bottle? Why do you say that? Why do you call it that?
— I believe it is your title, sir.
— I doubt it.

XI SELF PORTRAIT WITH SELF PORTRAIT, 1969. Oil. The Tate Gallery.
When he asked to see the exhibition, the gallery was closed for the afternoon so that he could see it alone and untroubled by crowds. His secretary, Bob Root, whose name habitually escapes him, carried the catalogue and read aloud from it. The artist smoked a pack of unfiltered cigarettes and dropped the cigarette ends on the floor. At several points he complained of poverty and harassment by government agencies. Asked by the gallery director what his preferences were, he said he preferred his latest work. "An artist is lucky. He gets better as he gets older. I am just beginning to paint."

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John Giorno

Guru Rinpoche

I've never been
to heaven
I've never been to heaven,
but I've been
to Oklahoma
but I've been to Oklahoma,
and they tell me
I was born
there
and they tell me I was born there,
but I really can't
remember
but I really can't remember

The red
rays
The red rays
issued
from his flesh
and blood
issued from his flesh and blood
and the red
portions
of his eyes
and the red portions
of his eyes

Each
word
Each word
is the sound-
equivalent
of an experience
is the sound-equivalent
of an experience

I've never been
to heaven
I've never been to heaven,
but I've been
to Oklahoma
but I've been to Oklahoma,
and they tell me
I was born
there
and they tell me I was born there,
but I really can't
remember
but I really can't remember

The red
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issued from his flesh and blood
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and the red portions
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Each
word
Each word
is the sound-
equivalent
of an experience
is the sound-equivalent
of an experience

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He sat
on a huge
hassock
He sat on a huge hassock
wrapped
in a voluminous
cloak
wrapped in a voluminous cloak
of yellow
padded
silk
of yellow padded silk,
shining
with butter
grease
shining with butter grease

there is
an indomitable
will
there is an indomitable will
which multiplies
in the form
of words
which multiplies in the form of
words
and gradually
they condense
themselves
and gradually they condense
themselves
in the form
of the deity
in the form of the deity

rising
above
rising above
all
the others
all the others
with its glittering
snowfields
with its glittering snowfields

He sat
on a huge
hassock
He sat on a huge hassock
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above
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all
the others
all the others
with its glittering
snowfields
with its glittering snowfields

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If you can't
be with
If you can't be with
the one
you love
the one you love,
then love
the one
you're with
then love the one you're with

Vajrasattva
Vajrasattva
clothes
himself
in the body
clothes himself in the body
of a young
boy
of a young boy

the transformation
of reality
the transformation of reality
into the vibrations
into the vibrations
of the human
voice
of the human voice

In order
to produce
In order to produce
alpha
alpha
they tried
to keep
their minds
they tried to keep their minds
blank
blank

If you can't
be with
If you can't be with
the one
you love
the one you love,
then love
the one
you're with
then love the one you're with

Vajrasattva
Vajrasattva
clothes
himself
in the body
clothes himself in the body
of a young
boy
of a young boy

the transformation
of reality
the transformation of reality
into the vibrations
into the vibrations
of the human
voice
of the human voice

In order
to produce
In order to produce
alpha
alpha
they tried
to keep
their minds
they tried to keep their minds
blank
blank

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the lake
The indigo the lake
rays had now assumed
The indigo rays the same
issued colour
from his hair had now assumed the same colour
issued from his hair as the sky
and the blue as the sky,
portions and we might have been
of his eyes soaring
and the blue portions and we might have been soaring
of his eyes in a space
of bright
the lake blue
the lake ether
had now assumed in a space of bright blue ether
the same
colour The indigo
had now assumed the same colour rays
as the sky The indigo rays
as the sky, issued
and we might have been from his skin
soaring issued from his skin
and we might have been soaring and the blue
in a space portions
of bright of his eyes
blue and the blue portions
ether of his eyes
in a space of bright blue ether
They produce
They produce They produce
a balanced a balanced
flow flow
of energy of energy
a balanced flow of energy a balanced flow of energy
between between
the bodies the bodies
between the bodies between the bodies
in embrace in embrace
in embrace

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He rotated
He rotated
his ass
on my cock
his ass on my cock

reported
reported
hypnagogic
dream-like
images
hypnagogic dream-like images,
as they were producing
as they were producing
low
frequency
low frequency
alpha
and theta
waves
alpha and theta waves

And feeling
good
And feeling good
was good
enough
for me
was good enough for me

He holds
in his four
hands
He holds in his four hands
the Vajra
the Vajra,
the sword
the sword,
the jewel
and the lotus
the jewel and the lotus

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The golden
rays
The golden rays
issued
from his skin
issued from his skin
and the golden
portions
of his eyes
and the golden portions
of his eyes

with its sound
with its sound
it calls
forth
its content
it calls forth its content
into immediate
reality
into immediate reality

requires
a gentle
"allowing"
requires a gentle "allowing"
rather than
a deliberate
effort
rather than a deliberate effort

Holding
Bobby's
body
Holding Bobby's body
close
to mine
close to mine

The golden
rays
The golden rays
issued
from his skin
issued from his skin
and the golden
portions
of his eyes
and the golden portions
of his eyes

with its sound
with its sound
it calls
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into immediate
reality
into immediate reality

requires
a gentle
"allowing"
requires a gentle "allowing"
rather than
a deliberate
effort
rather than a deliberate effort

Holding
Bobby's
body
Holding Bobby's body
close
to mine
close to mine

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as he felt
as he felt
as he felt
the thick
spurts
the thick spurts
of come
of come
shoot
from him
shoot from him
like hot
pellets
like hot pellets
of white-hot
lead
of white-hot lead

Imagine
Imagine
that you are offering
the whole
world
that you are offering
the whole world
to Guru
Rinpoche
to Guru Rinpoche

is no more
split
is no more split
into subject
and object
into subject and object
and rests
completely
in itself
and rests completely in itself

as he felt
as he felt
as he felt
the thick
spurts
the thick spurts
of come
of come
shoot
from him
shoot from him
like hot
pellets
like hot pellets
of white-hot
lead
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is no more split
into subject
and object
into subject and object
and rests
completely
in itself
and rests completely in itself

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He carries
He carries
He carries
the Vajra
in his right
hand
the Vajra in his right hand
with palm
upwards
with palm upwards
against
the chest
against the chest

feeling
his cock
feeling his cock
swelling
even more
swelling even more
inside
the man
inside the man
as it slid
in
and out
as it slid in and out

Feeling
good
Feeling good
was easy
was easy,
when Bobby
sang
the blues
when Bobby sang the blues

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and the Ghanta
and the Ghanta
and the Ghanta
(Bell
Bell)
in the left
hand
in the left hand
resting
against
the left
thigh
resting against the left thigh

It is
and is not
It is and is not,
it both is
and is not
it both is and is not,
it neither is
nor is not
it neither is nor is not,
it both
is and is not
and neither is nor is not
it both is and is not
and neither is nor is not

Let him
not
discharge
let him not discharge
the Bodhicitta
the Bodhicitta
(semen
semen)

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He thrust
his body
He thrust his body
back
and forth
back and forth

The white
rays
The white rays
issued
from his bones,
teeth
issued from his bones, teeth
and the white
portions
of his eyes
from the white portions of his eyes

the reality
of the inaudible
the reality of the inaudible
that pervades
and motivates
sound
that pervades and motivates sound

These were
the gifts
These were the gifts
of Chinese
emperors
of Chinese emperors
to a previous
body
to a previous body

He thrust
his body
He thrust his body
back
and forth
back and forth

The white
rays
The white rays
issued
from his bones,
teeth
issued from his bones, teeth
and the white
portions
of his eyes
from the white portions of his eyes

the reality
of the inaudible
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These were the gifts
of Chinese
emperors
of Chinese emperors
to a previous
body
to a previous body

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"I like
to watch
the expression
on your face
I like to watch
the expression on your face
when you shoot
your load
when you shoot your load
up
my ass
up my ass,"
he said
he said,
smiling
smiling

most
people
most people
produce
bursts
of alpha
produce bursts of alpha
when they close
their eyes
when they close their eyes
and cease
visual
imaging
and cease visual imaging

Words
Words
have more to do
with lies
have more to do with lies
and misunderstanding
and misunderstanding
than with
communication
than with communication

"I like
to watch
the expression
on your face
I like to watch
the expression on your face
when you shoot
your load
when you shoot your load
up
my ass
up my ass,"
he said
he said,
smiling
smiling

most
people
most people
produce
bursts
of alpha
produce bursts of alpha
when they close
their eyes
when they close their eyes
and cease
visual
imaging
and cease visual imaging

Words
Words
have more to do
with lies
have more to do with lies
and misunderstanding
and misunderstanding
than with
communication
than with communication

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dim
outlines
of ragged
figures
dim outlines of ragged figures
appear
to rush
towards
us
appear to rush towards us
and then
to float
silently
by
and then to float silently by

If you see
anything
beautiful
If you see anything beautiful,
don't cling
to it
don't cling to it;
if you see
anything
horrible
if you see anything horrible,
don't cling
to it
don't cling to it

Freedom
Freedom
is just
another
word
is just another word
for nothing
left
to lose
for nothing left to lose

dim
outlines
of ragged
figures
dim outlines of ragged figures
appear
to rush
towards
us
appear to rush towards us
and then
to float
silently
by
and then to float silently by

If you see
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Freedom
Freedom
is just
another
word
is just another word
for nothing
left
to lose
for nothing left to lose

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was in fulfillment
was in fulfillment
of that earlier
meeting
of that earlier meeting

the most beautiful
lover
the most beautiful lover
will desolve
will desolve
into a temporary
illusion
into a temporary illusion
the fantasy
of a desiring
mind
the fantasy of a desiring mind

they had been
drawn
together
they had been drawn together
in a previous
incarnation
in a previous incarnation

It also causes
the pupils
of the eyes
It also causes
the pupils of the eyes
to dilate
to dilate

expresses
expresses
the profound
sense
the profound sense
of anticlimax

they had been
drawn
together
they had been drawn together
in a previous
incarnation
in a previous incarnation

the most beautiful
lover
the most beautiful lover
will desolve
will desolve
into a temporary
illusion
into a temporary illusion
the fantasy
of a desiring
mind
the fantasy of a desiring mind

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It also causes
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to dilate
to dilate

expresses
expresses
the profound
sense
the profound sense
of anticlimax

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of anticlimax
that came
with freedom
that came with freedom

He found
himself
He found himself
staggering
slightly
staggering slightly
as he opened
the door
to the hall
as he opened
the door to the hall

he is perfected
he is perfected
and incapable
of sin
and incapable of sin
although
in incarnate
form
although in incarnate form
his body
is subject
to all
the suffering
his body is subject
to all the suffering
of earthly
bodies
of earthly bodies

I don't
want
to re-incarnate
I don't want to re-incarnate
anymore
anymore

of anticlimax
that came
with freedom
that came with freedom

he is perfected
he is perfected
and incapable
of sin
and incapable of sin
although
in incarnate
form
although in incarnate form
his body
is subject
to all
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He found
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He found himself
staggering
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as he opened
the door
to the hall
as he opened
the door to the hall

I don't
want
to re-incarnate
I don't want to re-incarnate
anymore
anymore

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He ran
panic-stricken
He ran panic-stricken
from room
to room
from room to room
trying
to find
trying to find
a familiar
human
shape
a familiar human shape

Rebirth
Rebirth
in any state
of existence
in any state of existence
does not
depend
does not depend
on one's
own
wish
on one's own wish

Then somewhere
near Salinas
Then somewhere near Salinas
I let him
slip
away
I let him slip away,
looking
for the home
looking for the home
I hope
he finds
I hope he finds

Rebirth
Rebirth
in any state
of existence
in any state of existence
does not
depend
does not depend
on one's
own
wish
on one's own wish

He ran
panic-stricken
He ran panic-stricken
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to room
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a familiar human shape

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away
I let him slip away,
looking
for the home
looking for the home
I hope
he finds
I hope he finds

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He felt
He felt physically
He felt physically exhausted
He felt physically exhausted
He felt physically exhausted but his mind
He felt physically exhausted but his mind kept churning
He felt physically exhausted but his mind kept churning

His power
His power consists
His power consists of whispering
His power consists of whispering potent
His power consists of whispering potent phrases
His power consists of whispering potent phrases from newspapers
His power consists of whispering potent phrases from newspapers

And I'd trade
And I'd trade all
And I'd trade all my tomorrows
And I'd trade all my tomorrows for a single
And I'd trade all my tomorrows for a single yesterday
And I'd trade all my tomorrows for a single yesterday

This simply
This simply means
This simply means that it has
This simply means that it has the power
This simply means that it has the power to change
This simply means that it has the power to change one
This simply means that it has the power to change one sort
This simply means that it has the power to change one sort of energy
This simply means that it has the power to change one sort of energy to a different
This simply means that it has the power to change one sort of energy to a different sort

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nothing
nothing I mean
nothing
nothing I mean nothing
but it's free
but it's free
nothing
and that's all
nothing and that's all
that Bobby
left
me
that Bobby left me

Then even
though
other
people
Then even though other people
may see
the body
walking
may see the body walking,
there will be
no man
in it
there will be no man in it

and becoming
and becoming
the slow
and patient
destruction
the slow and patient destruction
of all
you ever wanted
to do
of all you ever wanted to do

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Millions
of men
Millions of men
have turned
into rainbows
have turned into rainbows

The knot
The knot
in the silken
thread
in the silken thread
binding
demonic
forces
binding demonic forces
in devine
bondage
in devine bondage
will be untied
will be untied
and the cord
of faith
and the cord of faith
keeping
the human
mind
keeping the human mind
harmonious
harmonious
will be cut
will be cut.

Millions
of men
Millions of men
have turned
into rainbows
have turned into rainbows

The knot
The knot
in the silken
thread
in the silken thread
binding
demonic
forces
binding demonic forces
in devine
bondage
in devine bondage
will be untied
will be untied
and the cord
of faith
and the cord of faith
keeping
the human
mind
keeping the human mind
harmonious
harmonious
will be cut
will be cut.

1971

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Walter Abish has published a book of poetry, *Duel Site* (Tibor de Nagy Editions), and has contributed to *New American Review* and *New Directions*.

Don Asher was house pianist at the "hungry i" nightclub in San Francisco. He is the author of three novels: *The Piano Sport (1966)*, *Don't the Moon Look Lonesome (1967)*, and *The Electric Cotillion (1970)*.

Jim Brodey's *Blues of the Egyptian Rings (Poems 1964–1972)* will be published by Clothesline Press.

Stephen Canada has published poems in *Evergreen Review*, *Hearse*, and *Patterns*.

Loren Paul Caplin won awards at the Santa Barbara Writers Conference in 1969, and the Star Playwriting Contest at UCSB in 1970. He has published a book of poems, *Banjo*, and a novel, *Memoirs of a Hip Merchant*.

Ed Dorn is the author of *Some Business Recently Transacted in the White World* (Frontier Press) and *Gunslinger (Books I and II)* (Black Sparrow Press).

John Giorno's books include *Balling Buddha* (Kulchur, 1970) and *Cum* (Adventures in Poetry, 1971).

Denise Green, who made the drawings for "Rialto Phosphenes," lives in New York City.

Jim Gustafson lives in Detroit.

Hampton Hawes, who came to prominence playing with Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie and Miles Davis, recently completed a tour of European jazz festivals with his trio. He is currently working in Los Angeles.

Lou Horvath's poem, "Not Here," is included in his unpublished volume of poetry, *Sandra of the Joys*.

Dennis Jarrett lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Linda Kuehl is writing a biography of Billie Holliday for Stein and Day

Michael McClure's novel, *The Adept*, and collection of plays, *Gargoyle Cartoons*, have been recently published by Delacorte.

George Pitts attends Bennington College.

Charles Plymell is the author of *Apocalypse Rose* and *Neon Poems*.

Judith Rascoe was awarded an O. Henry prize. The Atlantic Monthly Press is publishing *Yours, And Mine And Other Stories* in Spring 1973.

James Salter is finishing work on a novel, *Hirâ*.

James Schuyler's *The Crystal Lithium*, a new collection of poems, was recently published by Random House.

Lorenzo Thomas has published poems in *Art & Literature*, *C Magazine*, *Massachusetts Review*, *Umbra*, *and Yardbird*. He edited *Ear* with Ted Greenwald.

Charlie Vermont's collection of poems, *Two Women*, was published by Angel Hair Books.

Bruce Wolmer, who wrote the text for "Rialto Phosphenes," lives in New York City.

Elzbieta Zowy shows at the Griva-Lumza Gallery in Warsaw.

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